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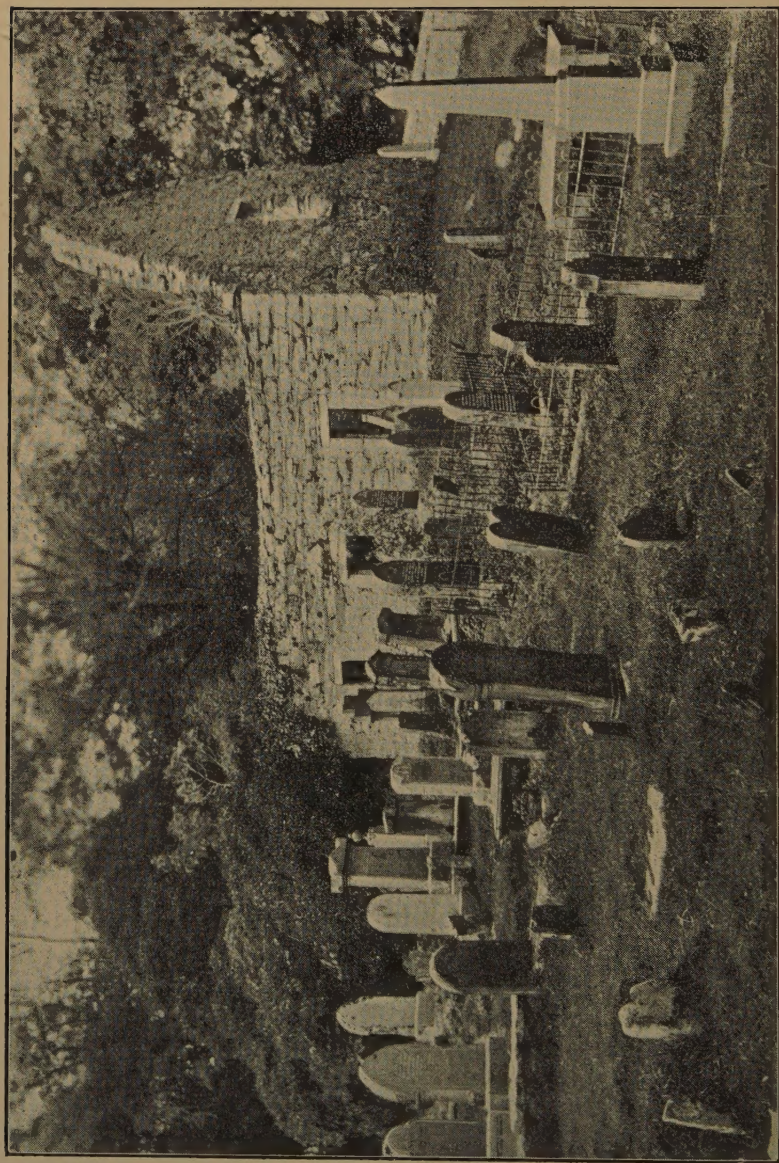
Mr. & Mrs. Campbell,
with Best Wishes.

August, 1931.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Volume I. of the Lectures, Sermons, and Writings of the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie having been received with so much acceptance by Christian people at home and abroad, the Publisher feels that he has no other alternative but to answer the call for more by giving to the world a further selection from those writings of "Mr Lachlan" which, through the providence of God, have fallen into his hands. So now, having done what he could, he sends it forth humbly trusting that this second volume may redound to the glory and honour of the Master whom Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie so worthily and consistently served.

ADDITIONAL
LECTURES, SERMONS, AND WRITINGS
OF
Rev. LACHLAN MACKENZIE
OF LOHCARRON.



THE OLD CHURCH OF LOHCARRON.

“THE REV. MR LACHLAN”

OF LOHCARRON

ADDITIONAL LECTURES, SERMONS, AND WRITINGS

OF A FAMOUS HIGHLAND MINISTER OF THE OLD SCHOOL

PRACTICALLY ALL HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED

Supplementary to Volume Already Published

Compiled and Published by

JAMES CAMPBELL, INVERNESS.

FOREWORD

THE Christian Church must feel deeply indebted to the Publisher for giving to the world these hitherto unpublished writings of the late Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, of Lochcarron. "Mr Lachlan," as he was and is still lovingly called, was no ordinary man among the ministers of his day and generation. He grew up, like Timothy, knowing the Scriptures from his childhood, and he was wont to be called to pray at meetings before he reached his teens. A great scholar and a great divine, he loved the Word of God and made it his counsellor in all things. Although often tempted of the devil, and hated by graceless sinners, he was a faithful feeder of the flock of Christ in his day, and of him it can truly be said that although dead he yet speaketh. May many hear the voice of the Son of God through him in this as in the former volume; and may it have a ready sale and prove a great blessing !

EWEN MACQUEEN.

F.P. Manse, Inverness,
1st July 1930.

EDITOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS book, like the previous volume, has for the chief part of its subject matter the lectures and writings of the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, Lochcarron. These lectures, in manuscript form, and in the author's own handwriting, were in the possession of Mr Alex. Fraser, of Messrs A. Fraser and Co., Inverness. We are much indebted to Mr Fraser for allowing us to copy these manuscripts and thus to save for posterity the writings of one of the greatest of our Highland ministers. We have also to thank the Rev. Principal MacLeod, Inverness, for allowing us to incorporate in the present volume the sermon entitled "The Rose of Sharon," which, we understand, was translated into Gaelic by the Rev. Professor Maclean, of Edinburgh. Sayings and anecdotes have also been contributed by the Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, and Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness. We are indebted also to the public for the welcome accorded to the first volume, which has encouraged us to complete the work we set out to do.

J. C.

HOW MR LACHLAN'S MSS. CAME INTO THE HANDS OF MR ALEX. FRASER

HAVING had a connection with the Free North Church, Inverness (Rev. Dr George Mackay's), both in the Sabbath School and as an attendant on the services with my parents, I was, with many others, greatly impressed by the eloquence and great power of the Rev. Dr Kennedy, of Dingwall. It was my privilege also at the Dingwall Sacraments to hear many of the "Men," including the famous Donald Duff. The frequent reference to Mr Lachlan's sayings led me to read and collect all I could get of his writings, etc. I communicated with various ministers, including Rev. Dr Kennedy and the Rev. Dr Aird, Creich, and through this source I ascertained that a relative of the late Mr Lachlan, a Miss Mackenzie, lived in Ross-shire, and had in her possession the whole of Mr Lachlan's documents, which were handed down to her. From Miss Mackenzie I learned that she had given them on loan to Mr Wm. Mackenzie (of Achindoune, Alness), who was then factor for Sir Alexander Matheson, Bart. of Ardross. This descendant of Mr Lachlan was quite agreeable that I should have the documents, but having in view their publication I declined to take them until a satisfactory arrangement was made for payment.

This being settled, Mr Mackenzie forwarded to me the hamper containing all his writings intact. Frequent attempts were made to publish a selection, and quite a number of the lectures, sermons, etc., were re-written with this object in view. The late Mr James Barron, Editor of the "Inverness

‘Courier,’” was much interested in them, and I suggested his publishing a selection. The pressure of other duties, however, prevented either of us from taking the matter up. When Mr James Campbell approached me I was so impressed with his keenness, and the earnest spirit which prompted him to face the ordeal of selecting and preparing the MSS. for publication, many of which were in tatters or torn, that I gladly consented to give him every assistance in the furtherance of a good cause, which aimed at keeping the Lamp of Truth burning.

ALEXANDER FRASER.

Inverness.

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LIFE AND TIMES
OF THE
REV. LACHLAN MACKENZIE



LIFE AND TIMES

OF THE

REV. LACHLAN MACKENZIE

It may be of interest to those who have read the account of the Life and Ministry of Mr Lachlan Mackenzie in the volume already published to know something of the religious life of the community and the ministry of his predecessors in Lochcarron, and in particular of Mr Aeneas Sage. The following notes are taken from "The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire":—

The immediate predecessor of Mr Lachlan Mackenzie in Lochcarron was Mr Donald Munro. "He was an agreeable man, and preached the Gospel in its purity," is Mr Lachlan's account of him—a tribute not kept back by recollections of his unkind treatment of himself when he was pursuing his studies for the ministry. Unable to appreciate his schoolmaster, and regarding his eccentricity as a proof of his being below and not above the average of intellectual power, he had always dissuaded Mr Lachlan from aspiring to the ministry, and refused him all aid against his enemies in the Presbytery. Mr Munro was preceded by the famous Mr Aeneas Sage—a man of undaunted spirit, who did not know what the fear of man was. He had, however, the fear of God and great zeal for the good cause in its highest perfection. He was the determined enemy of vice and a true friend of the Gospel. Such, according to Mr Lachlan, was the character of Mr Sage, the first minister who is known to have preached the Gospel in purity and with success in Lochcarron. At the time of his induction the state of the parish was very much the same as it was found by the Presbytery to be in 1649, when, after visiting it, they reported that there were no elders

in it, by reason of malignancy. Swearing, drunkenness, cursing, Sabbath profanation, and uncleanness prevailed. As to the Church, there was found in it "ane formal stool of repentance," but no pulpit nor desks. The stool, if the only, was truly the suitable seat for all the people in Lochcarron in these days; but the more it was required, the less power there was to make it aught else than "ane formal" thing, as the solitary occupant of the church. Matters continued in this state till the induction of Mr Sage nearly eighty years after. He was just the man for the work of breaking up the fallow ground of a field so wild, and a rich blessing rested on his labours. On the night of his first arrival at Lochcarron, an attempt was made to burn the house in which he lodged, and for some time after his induction his life was in constant danger. But the esteem he could not win as a minister, he soon acquired for his great physical strength. The first man in Lochcarron in those days was the champion at the athletic games. Conscious of his strength, and knowing that he would make himself respected by all if he could only lay big Rory on his back, who was acknowledged to be the strongest man in the district, the minister joined the people on the earliest opportunity at their games. Challenging the whole field, he competed for the prizes in putting the stone, tossing the caber, and wrestling, and won an easy victory. His fame was established at once. The minister was now the champion of the district, and none was more ready to defer to him than he whom he had deprived of the laurel. Taking Rory aside for a confidential crack, he said to him—"Now, Rory, I am the minister, and you must be my elder, and we both must see to it that all the people attend church, observe the Sabbath, and conduct themselves properly." Rory fell in with the proposal at once. On Sabbath, when the people would gather to their games in the forenoon, the minister and his elder would join them, and, each taking a couple by the hand, they would drag them to the church, lock them in, and then return to catch some more. This was repeated till none was left on the field. Then, stationing the elder with his cudgel at the door, the minister would mount the pulpit and conduct the service. One of his earliest sermons was blessed to the conversion of his assistant, and a truly valuable co-adjutor he found in big Rory thereafter. Mr Lachlan thus describes the result of his ministry:—"Mr Sage made the people very orthodox. They seem to have a strong attachment to religion. There is a great appearance of religion in Lochcarron; and as the fire of God's Word is hereafter to try every man's work, there is cause to hope that some of it will bear the trial."

Such was the state of Lochcarron at the time of Mr Lachlan's induction. Taught to respect a Godly minister, the people cordially welcomed Mr Lachlan as their pastor. His fame as a Christian was already great ; they had experience of his gifts as a speaker ; and he occupied at once the place of an approved ambassador of Christ in the regard of the people.

He was of a peculiarly sensitive temperament, rendering him susceptible of the deepest impressions. Were it not for his powerful intellect he would have been the creature of impulse, driven by his feelings rather than guided by his judgment. It is seldom so much mind and heart are found in one man. The light of a heartless intellectualism, or the fire of an impulsive sentimentalism are often the alternatives in the case of those who have risen above the crowd. But in him the clear head and the warm heart were connected. Capable of forming a vivid conception of a subject, his imagination never failed to furnish him with metaphors by which aptly to illustrate it. He was no poet, though he often rhymed. But if he could not form those pleasing combinations of natural objects which by their novelty and beauty attest the working of poetic genius, he had the power of tracing analogies between the things of intellect and the things of sense. This to a preacher is the more useful endowment, and the imagination is more safely employed in such an office than when scattering the gems of poesy over the treasures of truth. His Christian experience was singular. Early taught to know the Lord, one would have expected his course to have been unusually even. But the very reverse was the case, for few Christians ever experienced such marked changes of feeling. Now on the brink of despair under the power of temptation, and soon again in a state of rapturous enjoyment, shade and sunshine alternated in abrupt and rapid succession during the whole of his life. Ardent and imaginative as he was, the fiery darts of the wicked one flashed the more vividly and pierced the more deeply into his soul, and the joy that came to him from Heaven the more violently excited him. His prayerfulness was the leading feature of his Christianity. Much of his time was spent on his knees, and many a sleepless night he passed, sometimes wrestling, as for his life, against the assaults of the tempter, and at other times rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. The nearness to the mercy seat to which he was sometimes admitted was quite extraordinary. Proof of this might be given, because of which we cannot wonder that he had the fame and the influence of a prophet among the simple people of the North, although the record of the proof would cause much incredulous nodding of the wise heads of the South. Avoiding

the extreme of a superstitious credulity on the one hand, and of the formalist's scepticism on the other, it is altogether safe to say that Mr Lachlan enjoyed peculiarly familiar intercourse with God, and received such distinct intimations of His mind, in reference to the cases which he carried to the mercy seat, as but very few of God's children have obtained.

His preaching was always remarkable. His great originality of thought and manner, his apt and striking illustrations, his clear and emphatic utterance, the unction and authority with which he spoke, his close dealing with the conscience, his dexterous and tender handling of the cases of the tempted, his powerful appeals, his solemn earnestness, and his frequent outbursts of impassioned feeling, could not fail to win for him a measure of acceptance, as they gave him a measure of power beyond that of any other of his brethren. His was preaching to which all could listen with interest. His striking illustrations, often homely, though always apt, would arrest the attention of the most ignorant and careless. There was an intellectual treat in his sermons for such as could appreciate the efforts of genius. The scoffer was arrested and awed by the authority with which he spoke, and every hearer seeking the bread of life hung upon his lips. A congregation was always eager to hear what Mr Lachlan had to say. A large crowd once gathered in Killearnan to hear him. So many had assembled that the church could not contain them, and the service was conducted in the open air. When the text was announced, a rude fellow, sitting in the outskirts of the congregation, called out in the excitement of his eagerness—"Speak out; we cannot hear." Mr Lachlan, not disconcerted in the least, raised his voice, and said—"My text is, 'Ye have need of patience,' " which the man no sooner heard than he was fain to hold his tongue and hide his face with shame. The minuteness with which he described the feelings and habits of his hearers, and the striking confirmation of his doctrine often given by the Lord in His providence, gave him an extraordinary influence over his people. Preaching on one occasion against the sin of lying, he counselled his people to refrain in all circumstances from prevarication and falsehood, assuring them that they would find it their best policy for time, as well as their safest course for eternity.

One of his hearers, conscious of having often told a lie, and finding it impossible to believe that it could always be wise to tell the truth, went to speak to the minister on the subject. He was a smuggler, and, while conversing with Mr Lachlan, he said—"Surely, if the exciseman should ask me where I hid my whisky, it would not be wrong that I should lead him off the scent." His minister would not allow that this was a

case to which the rule he laid down was not applicable, and advised him, even in such circumstances, to tell the simple truth. The smuggler was soon after put to the test. While working behind his house by the way-side on the following week, the exciseman came up to him and said, "Is there any whisky about your house to-day?" Remembering his minister's advice, the smuggler at once said, "Yes, there are three casks of whisky buried in a hole under my bed, and if you will search for them there you will find them." "You rascal," the exciseman said, "if they were there you would be the last to tell me," and at once walked away. As soon as he was out of hearing, and the smuggler could breathe freely again, he exclaimed—"Oh, Mr Lachlan, Mr Lachlan, you were right as usual." On another occasion, he was bearing testimony against dishonest dealing, assuring his hearers that, sooner or later, the Lord would punish all who held the balance of deceit. As an example of how the Lord sometimes, even in this life, gives proof of His marking the sin of dishonesty, he repeated an anecdote which was current at the time. A woman, who had been engaged in selling milk, with which she always mingled a third of water, and who had made some money by her traffic, was going with her gains to America. During the voyage she kept her treasure in a bag, which was always under her pillow. There was a monkey on board the ship that was allowed to go at large. In course of its wanderings the monkey came to the milk-woman's hammock, in rummaging which it found the bag of gold. Carrying it off, the monkey mounted the rigging, and, seating itself aloft on a spar, opened the bag and began to pick out the coins. The first it threw out into the sea, and the second and third it dropped on the deck, and so on, till a third of all the contents of the bag had sunk in the ocean, the owner of the bag being allowed to gather off the deck just what she had fairly earned by her milk. One of Mr Lachlan's hearers remembered, while listening to this anecdote, that he had in his trunk at home a bundle of bank notes, which he had got by the sale of diluted whisky. Feeling very uneasy, he hurried to his house after the sermon was over. It was dark before he arrived, and, kindling a pine torch, he hastened to the place where he kept his money, afraid that it had been taken away. Holding the torch with one hand, while he turned over the notes with the other, a flaming ember fell right down into the midst of the treasure, and before the man, bewildered as he was, could rescue them, as many of the notes were consumed as exactly represented the extent to which he had diluted the whisky.

Never did a sudden death occur in the parish during his ministry without some intimation of it being given from the pulpit on the previous Sabbath ; and sometimes warnings would be so strikingly verified that one cannot wonder he was regarded as a prophet by his people. Such instances of the minute guidance of the Lord could not fail to make a deep impression on a simple-minded people, and should not fail to make some impression on any people.

REMINISCENCES AND
ANECDOTES

REMINISCENCES AND ANECDOTES

THE SECRET OF THE LORD IS WITH THEM THAT
FEAR HIM

REV. LACHLAN MACKENZIE used to assist the Rev. Hugh Mackay, minister of Dalarossie, Strathdearn, Inverness-shire. At the conclusion of the service on Monday on one occasion, while Mr Mackenzie was detained in bidding farewell to some friends, Mr Mackay went away to the Manse. When Mr Mackenzie came in, and had waited for some time without seeing Mr Mackay, he called the housekeeper and asked her where he was. She answered that he had gone out. When he asked whether it would be long before Mr Mackay came back, she replied that he sometimes did not return till night came. "Do you know the way he usually goes?" he asked. She replied that she did, and, taking him outside, she proceeded to show him a footpath going into the wood beside the manse. Mr Mackenzie followed the path, and came to a green spot in the wood, where he found Mr Mackay rolling himself on the ground, weeping bitterly. He enquired after the cause of his anguish. The answer was—"I had a promise from God's Word that some would be converted during the Communion season that is now past, and I was deceived, for none has been converted. I was as sure in my own mind that I got that truth as I was of the truth upon which I build my hope of being saved, so I have been deceived in the one as well as in the other." Mr Mackenzie said, "If that is the cause of your weeping, you may take comfort, for you have taken two out of the kingdom of darkness yourself, and I took three out of it." At the next Communion the five appeared before the Kirk-Session, and were received to membership in the congregation. This shows that the secret of the Lord, "which is with them that fear Him," was in an eminent degree with Mr Mackenzie.

Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie asked his servant, after family worship one morning, to bring his horse saddled to the manse door, and that he was to prepare himself to accompany him. When the servant had done so, Mr Mackenzie mounted, and turned the horse's head towards Glencarron, the servant following. When they had gone about six miles, he turned

into a mountain track, which strikes northward, near the present Railway Station of Achnashellach. Onwards they went until they came to the summit of a ridge. On the top of an opposite ridge a woman came in sight, with a burden on her back. Mr Mackenzie turned round, and said to his servant, "I see now what brought us here." At the bottom of the valley between the ridges there runs a river, and it was here that they met. The woman waited on her side of it until the horseman should cross the ford. When Mr Lachlan got across, he asked her where she was bound for, and for what purpose. "I am going," she said, "to Lochcarron to see if the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie will baptise this child which the Lord has given me, and which I have on my back." He enquired then as to where she had come from, and when she told him, he wished to know why she did not get her child baptised by the minister of her own parish. She said that it was not her habit to tell every man what she might have to say against ministers, because it might damage the cause of Christ. "I am," he said, "Lachlan Mackenzie, Lochcarron." "Will you baptise my child?" she asked. "First of all," said Mr Lachlan, "you must tell me why you did not get him baptised by your own minister." "If you will ask the servant to go away so far as he will not hear me, I will tell you." When the servant had retired out of earshot, she explained everything to the worthy minister. Then Mr Lachlan called the man, told him to take the child off her back, performed a solemn, brief service, and baptised the child with the water of the river. When this was done, the servant replaced the child on her back, and she set off home again. Mr Lachlan returned to the Manse of Lochcarron. The writer received this story from an old man in Lochcarron over thirty years since. This man served Mr Lachlan as a lad. It is evident that Mr Lachlan must have been led by a portion of God's Word, or by an inward impulse, to go all these miles to meet the woman; for he did not know, until he saw her in the distance, where they were going, or for what purpose. One thing is quite plain, and that is that the Lord's hand was manifestly seen by the mysterious way He took to help the poor, Godly woman in her effort to keep back the hands of an ungodly minister from administering to her child the Sacrament of baptism.

It is related concerning Mr Lachlan that on a certain day he was told that one of his elders, whom he appreciated very much for his piety, was very sick. When he went to see him, and saw that he was very seriously ill, he went on his knees beside the man's bed, and prayed God to spare

the man to them in Lochcarron a while yet, as they had great need of him, and if Death should have one at that time from their midst, that there was a fat mouthful for him at such a place. Shortly afterwards the poor man began to recover, but a fat south-country farmer in the neighbourhood died suddenly. A son of this farmer, who was an officer in the Army, came home to the funeral. He was told of Mr Lachlan's prayer ; so he took his sword with him, and went towards the manse in a great rage. He met Mr Lachlan taking a walk on the public road. The officer asked him whether he was the minister of the parish. He replied that he was. The officer immediately drew his sword, and told him that he would have his life for having killed his father. The minister denied that he had killed his father. The officer repeated the words he had used in prayer for another man, adding that as it was on account of that prayer his father died, he would, therefore, take his life. Mr Lachlan said to him—"Surely you will allow me to pray before you will do that." He agreed that he would allow him to pray. Mr Lachlan said to him—"Now, if the Lord will not answer my prayer, and that you will kill me, my soul will be singing in glory before you pass the churchyard" (which was only about a hundred yards off), "but if He will answer my prayer, you will die on the spot, and your soul will be wailing in hell before I am at the manse door." The officer placed the sword in the scabbard, and went off quick march, without saying a word.

In the year 1816, Mr Lachlan invited three of his brethren to assist him at his Communion, namely, Dr Macdonald, Ferintosh ; Mr Kennedy, Redcastle, and Dr Ross, Lochbroom. Dr Macdonald received the following letter :—"I hear that you keep a large store of powder, which you use in blasting. I wish you to come to try your skill in breaking the hard rocks of Lochcarron." He accepted the invitation, and reached the manse of Lochcarron on the evening before the Fast-day, along with Dr Ross, of Lochbroom, and Mr Kennedy, of Killearnan. Mr Lachlan had been looking forward with great delight to the prospect of their visit and their services. He said to his sister a few weeks before—"I have sent for Mr Macdonald with the Law, and for Mr Kennedy with the Gospel, and for Dr Ross with the Learning, and I will come after them myself with prayer, and I think we shall have a good time of it. But at the eleventh hour his courage gave way. The Tempter persuaded him that they would not come, and when they arrived he was in bed in one of his fits of unbelief. When his sister told him that they had come, he refused to believe her till she had sent Mr Kennedy to his room. He then got

up at once, came down in an ecstasy of joy to meet them, gave them a most fervent greeting, and hurried to the press for some refreshments to give them after their long journey. Having placed the food on the table, he said to Mr Macdonald—"You are the stranger, and you must ask a blessing." "No," he replied, "if you are to give us your good things, give us a prayer with them." This he did at once, in these words, in Gaelic—"Tha fhios agad a Thighiarna gun robh a namhaid ag 'innsiagh dhuinne nach d'chigeadh do shirbhisich, agus gun bitheadh ball du air Tiaobhar, ach gloor dhuit a'nis gun do chur thu clach na chraos.—Amen."* These words being the first Mr Macdonald heard Mr Lachlan utter in prayer, made a deep impression on his memory, and often did he repeat them afterwards. His opinion of Mr Lachlan he gives in a letter to Mr Sinclair, Thurso, written soon after his first visit to Lochcarron.

"Mr Lachlan," he writes, "is worth going miles to see. He is a dear servant of God, and lives near Him at His footstool. He has failed much in body, but his mind is almost as vigorous as ever. He is truly a spiritually-minded Christian. He feels disheartened over the impenitence of Lochcarron sinners; and, indeed, there are not many of a contrary description in his parish. Yet he cannot believe but the Lord has a design yet to do good to Lochcarron, and he charged us who assisted him, and all the Lord's people, to carry Lochcarron on our spirits, and to pray much for his poor people. Worthy man, little did he seem to know that some of those whom he thus charged had more need that he should pray for them."

All Mr Lachlan's talents were laid at the Saviour's feet. Well might he say with the Apostle Paul, "Whose I am and whom I serve," for his absorbing desire was God's glory and the salvation of sinners. It is recorded of him that he had stated that he never brought the cause of a sinner before the mercy-seat but the Lord revealed to him the sinner's condition and what he was to do with him.

True godliness takes cognisance of realities, and Mr Lachlan's practical mind, ever on the alert to find the joints in the sinner's armour, not infrequently feathered the arrow of reproof with the poetic touch.

Before the passing of the Forbes-Mackenzie Act, the public-houses in Scotland were open on the Sabbath Day. Mid-way between the farm of Tulloch and the Lochcarron

* "Thou knowest, O Lord, that the enemy was saying to us Thy servants would not come, and that there would be a black spot on Thy cause; but now, Glory be to Thee, Thou has thrust a stone in his mouth."—Amen.

Inn stands the old church. Two young men from the farm were in the habit of frequenting the inn, and Mr Lachlan on several occasions observed them through the windows passing the church shortly after the service began. It deeply grieved the heart of the man of God to see men thus trampling on the Lord's Day and destroying their own souls. Being at the farm-house one day, when both the young men were present, he struck off the following couplet in Gaelic :—

Theid Ian 'us Eouinn a 'gh-ol ;
 'Us iar 'us iad sto'h ma seach ;
 'Us ma theid an dis do ghlòr
 Theid Peadoir 'us Pol a nach.

It may be translated thus :—

John and Ewen do drink ;
 They order half-mutchkin about ;
 If Both will go to glory
 Peter and Paul will go out.

The arrow pierced the conscience of one of the young men ; his sin and danger brought home to him in the light of Scripture wrought a great change within him ; change of mind led to change of conduct and company, and henceforth the Sabbath found him, not in the public-house, but in the house of prayer. In due course he became an exemplary Christian, but his companion, as the couplet hinted, heeded not the warning, but, "hardening his neck" in the ways of sin, passed on as he that is ready to be "destroyed without remedy," thus fulfilling what had been revealed to this great watcher for souls.—"One shall be taken and the other left."

The inn having become vacant on one occasion, a certain man in the village entertained thoughts of becoming its lessee, but his mind not being quite at ease as to the respectability of the innkeeper's calling, he decided to ask advice of Mr Lachlan. On meeting the minister, he unbosomed himself to him, the conversation taking place in Gaelic, when he received the following figurative and arresting reply :—"Gu bhi a t-ostor tha feum agad air tre nithe, eiripul cu, gulle na muic 'us cre cloich, agus mur bi na tre nithe sin agad cha dean thu ostar maith a chaoidh." ("To be an innkeeper you need three qualifications—a dog's tail, a sow's maw, and a heart of stone, and without these three things you will never make a successful innkeeper." We leave the reader to solve the riddle.

Nestling at the foot of the hills on the south side of Loch-carron lies Attadale. Mr Lachlan visited this township at intervals to preach to the people, the passage thither being

across the loch by boat. On such occasions it was customary for a number of the Lord's people to accompany their pastor. On one of these occasions, a larger company than usual, several of which were women, went with the minister. The boat was overloaded, but the day being fine, no danger was apprehended. When, however, they were about the middle of the loch, a sudden storm arose. As on the Gallilean lake of old, the waves rising higher and higher under the fury of the wind, dashed over the deeply-laden boat. The rowers plied their oars with all their might, but the prospect grew more and more alarming. They would never reach the shore! They would be swamped! So reasoned many of the occupants. The women began to weep. At length the minister himself, like the disciples of old, showed manifest signs of fear. Again the cry arose—"Lord, save us; we perish." The rowers strove manfully at their task, and at last the boat, getting under the shelter of the land, was safely beached. Among the rowers was one of Mr Lachlan's elders. Having helped to secure the boat, he turned to the minister, and said—"I wonder at so godly a man as you, Mr Lachlan, being afraid." "Oh," replied the minister, "although the Lord promised me that he would not cast me to hell, He did not promise me that He would not drown me."

When Scriptural authority is cast aside, one of the first institutions to suffer in its sanctity and its claims is the Sabbath, the great bulwark of true liberty, the day on which worldly ties being severed and worldly distinctions being laid aside, master and servant, peer and peasant, appear on equality before God, to take part in worshipping Him. At this period a company of English tourists arrived at Lochcarron one Saturday evening, on their way to view the beauties of Skye. In those days Lochcarron was the embarking point for the "Misty Isle." Paying no regards to the claims of the Lord's Day, the Englishmen tried to secure boatmen to ferry them across to Skye on the morrow. Wherever they pressed their enquiries, however, they were reminded of their duty to "sanctify the Sabbath." This they determined not to do. Yet no one offered them his services. Neither pleading, scoffing, nor the temptation of a liberal supply of English gold availed to entice the boatmen, who stoutly maintained that they would not engage in work of any kind on the Lord's Day, except work of necessity and mercy, and that they would do without reward. The Englishmen now urged the usual plea of the Sabbath-breaker when cornered—necessity. This the boatmen refused to accept as true, but at last yielded so

far as to suggest that they (the tourists) lay their case before the minister, and they (the boatmen) would abide by his decision. This the tourists disdained to do, scorning the very thought of submitting to a Highland minister in anything. But the boatmen were adamant, and they themselves were impatient. At last, after consultation, they sent a letter by a boy to the manse. The letter was handed to the minister. He read it in silence, re-folded and enclosed it in the envelope, called for the boy, and when he entered the study, handed him the letter, addressing him thus, in Gaelic :—

“ So, thoir ’n litir sin gus na, flaitheanes, cha leamsa ’n t-sabaid idir,” or in English—“ There, deliver that letter in heaven; the Sabbath is not mine at all.”

During that Sabbath the Englishmen perforce “ rested according to the Commandment.”

There was in Lochcarron a gracious woman, one of the excellent of the earth, who was afflicted with a bad memory. Her inability to carry away with her the precious things she heard, as she sat under Mr Lachlan’s ministry, caused her great distress. Deeply dejected in mind, she went to make known her case to the minister. Having heard what she had to say, the worthy man, in order to break the snare and to impress upon her the superior blessing of receiving fresh supplies of grace to the possession of a good memory, took the following way to reassure her :—“ Take,” said he, “ a bottle. Fill it with fresh water, cork it and lay it aside carefully. Take another bottle. Put it in the clachan burn, and leave it uncorked, so that as the water flows into it it flows out again. Go back at the end of a year and examine the bottles, and you will find that the water in the bottle which flowed out as it flowed in is fresh, whereas the water in the bottle which did not lose a drop is rotten.”

Mr Lachlan wore at times homespun, and preached on several occasions while thus attired. This gave umbrage to some who were more concerned about orthodox clerical garb than about orthodox and savoury doctrine. The matter was reported to the Presbytery, with the result that Mr Lachlan was required to appear before that Court to answer for his conduct. The preaching of borrowed sermons by lazy and incompetent ministers is no new thing, and among the Presbytery members, it would appear, were some addicted to this unorthodox practice. To it Mr Lachlan gave a shrewd blow in his defence. “ I can go into the pulpit,” said the worthy

minister, "in a homespun suit and preach an English sermon, and I can go into the pulpit in an English suit and preach a homespun sermon." The hit was too palpable. The pressing of all-round conformity might have had very unexpected consequences for his persecutors, so they let the matter drop.

But the man of God did not always get off so lightly at the hands of the worldly-minded among his brethren. The Lochcarron Presbytery in those days usually met at New Kelso, near the head of the loch. When the hour appointed for one of its meetings had come, Mr Lachlan had not put in an appearance. The brethren, however, decided not to proceed until he should arrive. The Moderator was the minister of Glenelg—a typical "Moderate." On Mr Lachlan's arrival, the Moderator, impatient of the delay, saluted him in Gaelic thus:—" 'N douaig 'u, Lachlan, na casan fada ?" ("Have you arrived, long-legged Lachlan?") (Lachlan was a tall, spare man.) To this unseemly salutation, the minister of Lochcarron retorted—" N'd thus 'th ann amadan na Cleire ?" ("Is that you, the fool of the Presbytery?") The Moderator, turning purple with rage, and springing to his feet, shouted that he would have Lachlan expelled from the ministry for calling him a fool, an expression forbidden by Scripture. The assembled brethren were amazed, the evangelicals among them deeply grieved. The attack upon Mr Lachlan was wholly uncalled for: if the retort was sharp, the provocation was great; further, all knew that Mr Lachlan had only voiced the commonly held opinion regarding the Moderator. Yet, superficially at least, the Moderator appeared to have some ground for objecting to the epithet cast at him. Accordingly, a meeting of Presbytery was fixed, when the matter would be threshed out. As the time drew on, Mr Lachlan fell under a fit of unbelief, fear filled his mind that the worst would happen. On the morning of the day appointed for the Presbytery meeting, having visited a member of his congregation, who was a great wrestler at the throne of grace, he expressed himself as dreading the Presbytery's decision. Being advised, however, to "stay himself upon his God," with much trepidation he proceeded to the meeting. When he arrived, the New Kelso meeting-house was crowded. All the members were present, and such of the godly in Lochcarron as could attend, fearing the treatment which might be meted out to their minister, came to witness the issue.

The Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, Torridon (the only minister ever settled in that place since the days of the Columban missionaries) was Moderator. As Mr Lachlan entered, he was offered a chair by the Moderator. "Ni sin urnuigh an tosaich" ("We shall pray first") was Mr Lachlan's

reply, and without further ado he (Mr Lachlan) began to pray. Very soon the meeting-house became dark, as with approaching night; a terrific tempest of wind and rain descended upon the building, as though to overwhelm it. Next, a low, rumbling noise, as of earthquake, was heard, the house began to rock, and all present feared their last hour had come. At this point, Mr Lachlan, still praying, cried with a loud voice—" 'N cau mi e? 'N cau me e? 'N cau me e?" ("Shall I say it? Shall I say it? Shall I say it?"), stopped abruptly, picked up his hat, and walked away home. As soon as he stopped praying, the darkness passed away, the tempest and the earthquake ceased, and Rev. Roderick Mackenzie, the Moderator, having somewhat recovered from the general alarm, broke the silence by saying—"Whoever will be against Mr Lachlan, I won't." But the Glenelg minister, now that the danger had passed, like Pharaoh of old, hardened his heart, and demanded that, as Mr Lachlan had not answered the charge, he be made to appear before the Presbytery again. There was nothing for it but to appoint another meeting to hear the case. It may here be added that at the village of Lochcarron, about three miles away, nothing unusual happened, the sun shone brightly, and the people continued without interruption to work on their crofts; the strange happenings at New Kelso were confined to the vicinity of the meeting-house.

In proceeding to the second meeting of Presbytery, Mr Lachlan was as buoyant in spirits as he had been depressed when on the way to the first. In answer to the charge of calling a brother minister a fool, he replied—"He who created my legs is He who created all things, and He has himself pronounced concerning all that He did create that He saw that it was very good, and none but a fool would find fault with anything He did create." The reply was unanswerable; the mouth of the wicked was stopped; confusion fell upon the head of the adversary, who was now branded a fool, not by the opinion of man only, but in accordance with that Word which he had sought to employ as a cloak for his malice and an instrument to further his fell design. "The wicked are ensnared in the work of their own hands."

The writer had the foregoing notes from his uncle, who in turn heard them from William Beaton, Slumbay, who was for a considerable period man-servant with the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie.

Mr Lachlan, by his courageous stand for the oppressed, and his outspoken denunciation of the ruthless practice of clearing crofters off the land to make room for sheep, brought

upon him much persecution. The owner of a certain farm adjoining the manse was so very covetous that it was commonly reported among the people that he never saw a green spot of earth but he coveted it as his own. When covetousness and power meet together in a man, justice and righteousness are too often forgotten, and harsh measures resorted to when a desired end is to be accomplished. This was painfully manifest in the former's conduct. And Mr Lachlan did not spare him. Smarting under the pungent criticism of the worthy minister, he met him on one occasion, and began to threaten that he would turn his church into a sheep fank and his manse into a smearing shed. To this threat, Mr Lachlan retorted—"Mu churus mise feis gu Ian Mor a Chaistal Ruadh agus Robertsonach Cinneussie agus m' ni iadsan casaid ort ri n'athair cha neil ann an neimh no air thalamh na chumas tus a ifrinn." ("If I send a message to big John of Redcastle (Rev. John Kennedy) and Robertson (Rev. Mr Robertson), Kingussie, and if they report your conduct to their Father, there is not in heaven or on earth that can prevent you being cast into hell.")

He further added that, despite the farmer's boundless covetousness and great wealth, his grandson would die in the poorhouse. This was fulfilled as foretold, the farmer's grandson dying in the Inverness Poorhouse about the year 1890.

In Mr Lachlan's day the Church of Scotland groaned under the twin evils of "moderatism" and "intrusion." Mr Lachlan repeatedly informed his hearers from the pulpit that deliverance from these evils would be forthcoming in a shorter period than that which measured the captivity in Babylon; but warned them that the deliverance would be comparatively brief, and would be succeeded by a great falling-away from the faith, when the plague of graceless ministers in the land would be more grievous than the plague of locusts in Egypt, of which we read that it was "very grievous." Shortly after discoursing on this doleful subject, he was one day met by one of his parishioners, who, referring to the approaching gloomy day of which the minister had spoken, remarked—"S cintach anns san la sin nach bi aon chriosti ann-'n Lochcarròn" ("Surely in that day there will not be one Christian in Lochcarron"), to which the worthy pastor, who had so much of the "secret of the Lord," gave the reassuring reply—"Co fad's a bhios tonn a bualadh air ereig bidh criosduigh ann an Lochcarròn." "While the waves continue to dash on the rocks there will be a Christian in Lochcarron.")

Readers of the tract, "Muckle Kate," whose conversion in her old age, after a life spent in gross sin, was an answer to years of "prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him who is able to save," on the part of Mr Lachlan, know how, at a Communion service in the open field at Lochcarron, where thousands were present, that trophy of grace; blind by weeping over her sins, was led forward by the minister to the Lord's Table for the first time, where she sat alone; and how, in serving the table, speaking from the words—"Not a hoof of them shall be left," Mr Lachlan's address was so blessed to the assembled multitude that it is computed that two hundred were awakened to a sense of their lost estate. That memorable table has been called "Muckle Kate's Table." Referring to it, Mr Lachlan said that another occasion would occur in Lochcarron, when the Lord's Table would be served having only one person sitting at it, and that, he added, would be a sign that the great declension, of which he had so often forewarned the people, had already begun. This took place, as foretold. The writer's father and uncle were present when this table was served. The one individual who sat at it was the late deeply exercised and greatly respected Malcolm Kennedy, of Kishorn, who finished his course in Inverness.

The incident happened thus :—The service, as usual, was in the open field. Judging by the number of members present, the officiating ministers considered that three tables would be required to hold them all. To the first and second table members came forward very readily, and those tables were more than ordinarily full, so that when the invitation to the third table was given out, only Malcolm Kennedy came forward, and it was served with him alone sitting at it. The writer was not informed who the officiating ministers were, nor the year when the incident occurred. All he could ascertain is that it was about 1880.

In instructing the people, Mr Lachlan, like his Divine Master, and the prophets of old, made frequent and effective use of "similitudes." By the wayside, and some distance westward of the church, he dug a well, which he called "Tobar Suthain"—the Everlasting Well—adding that it would be so called while the world lasts. Some time afterwards one of his people called upon him, requesting baptism. Before granting this privilege it was the practice of evangelical ministers in those days to examine applicants as to their knowledge of man's ruined state by nature and the way of Gospel salvation, the ignorant being refused until they became

better acquainted with the Scriptures. The first question the minister asked the man was, "Cait 'm bheil tobar suthain?" ("Where is the Everlasting Well?") (Jer. xvii. 13).—"Eator 'n clachan agus an tighosd" ("Between where the church is and the inn.") "Cha naidh thu 'n baisteadh" ("You wont get baptism.") The man went away crestfallen, but on meeting one of the elders, to whom he unbosomed himself, he was advised to go to the Catechist for instruction. Having been under the tuition of that worthy functionary for some time, he returned to the minister, who repeated his former question. This time, however, the correct answer was given, when Mr Lachlan added, "Tha mi faicinn gun robh thu coimhead air Ian Mac Dhunachidh" ("I see you have paid a visit to John the son of Duncan—the Catechist.") Other questions having been satisfactorily answered, baptism was duly administered.

On another occasion, when another of Mr Lachlan's people came for baptism, the first question asked him was, "Ce as a thanaig uisg a bhaistidh?" ("Where did the water of baptism come from?") (John xix. 34. John v. 5, 6, 8; Zech. xiii. 1). "A ault a chlachan" ("From the Clachan Burn.") "Cha naidh thu 'n baisteadh" ("You wont get baptism.") There was nothing for it but to go for instruction to the obliging Catechist, whose efforts at imparting knowledge brought about the desired result.

The above two notes were told by the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie's niece, Mrs Mackenzie, who lived at Strome, the worthy lady adding that on one occasion, when visited by two ministers, she told them these notes, and asked them to answer the questions, but they had to confess they could not. We have surely reached a woeful pass when the shepherds lack the knowledge which in former days was required of the meanest of the flock.

The last child baptised by Mr Lachlan was the future eminent Rev. Alexander MacColl, who finished his course on earth in Lochalsh, than whom there was no greater preacher of the Evangel in his day. His father at the time was a shepherd in Lochcarron. As showing how Mr Lachlan had the secret of the Lord, it is recorded that, as the father was handing back the child to its mother, after being baptised, Mr Lachlan said, "Thoir an deadh aire air an leanabh, bithidh e fathast na lochran dealrach leis an Tighearn" ("Take good care of the child; he will yet be a shining light of the Lord.")

When on his death-bed Mr Lachlan realised that the end was at hand, he sent his manservant for the Rev. Roderick

Mackenzie, Torridon, a truly gracious minister, for whom Mr Lachlan had the highest regard. Before his manservant set off for Torridon across the hill, he advised him, when returning with the minister, to observe the well near the top of the pass above Lochcarron—Fuaran Cath an Rididh—and if the water in the well was low, they were to make haste, as that would indicate that he (Lachlan) was still in life, but if the water was high, they might proceed at their leisure, for he would have departed this life. As the manservant, making all haste on his way to Torridon, passed the well, he observed the water in it to be exceptionally low. Having stated his errand, he and the minister of Torridon hastened back together. When they reached Fuaran cath an Rididh, they found it overflowing; nevertheless, they did not slacken their pace, but held on for the Lochcarron Manse. On their arrival they found that the saintly minister of Lochcarron had entered into the joy of his Lord shortly before their arrival at the well.

The Rev. Roderick Mackenzie here referred to is he who was Moderator at the memorable Presbytery meeting held at New Kelso, recorded above. He was also present at an induction service where Mr Lachlan preached a remarkable sermon, when, among other pointed things, in warning both the minister and the people of their responsibility before God, he said that there would be streets in hell paved with the heads of graceless ministers. This saying did not please Mr Roderick, who, after the service, accosted Mr Lachlan, asking him what he had to say for using such language. "Nothing," was Mr Lachlan's emphatic rejoinder, "but take you good care that your own big head won't be in it."

Regarding his successor, Mr Lachlan told the people of Lochcarron that he would be a "dumb dog that would not bark" (Isa. lvi. 10). This proved to be the case.

In warning the people of Lochcarron of the preciousness of Gospel truth and the great privilege of sitting under the ministry of such as declared the "whole counsel of God," he stated that as a proof that he had never delivered to the people but what he received from the Holy Spirit, two trees would grow, one on each side of the spot where his pulpit stood, and that nowhere else would there be found precisely the same kind of tree; that when they grew up and their branches intertwined above the pulpit, they would fall to the ground; that would be a sign that the apostacy of the latter days had already begun. All this occurred as foretold. The church, being small and old, a new and larger building—the present

Parish Church—was erected a short distance eastward of the burying-ground, in which the old church stands. The trees grew, nobody knows how, as two witnesses to the truth of the doctrine delivered by the man of God to the people, and when their branches intertwined they fell over on the ground, where they lie in a decaying condition, but still there.

LECTURES
ON SEVERAL PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE
HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED

LECTURE

On MATTHEW ii. 1 to End

WHEN mankind fell from God by the great apostacy of Adam, they were recovered again by the Word of His grace. At the very time that the sentence was given against man, he was informed that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. Mankind were long, by this mystical promise, cheered and comforted. It was opened up gradually by succeeding promises, and revealed by degrees in the different ages of the Church. This truth was the substance of the doctrine of the Prophets and the sacred meaning of the sacrifices, the ceremonies and the types of the Old Testament Church. Many prophets and good men longed for this day, but they only saw it by faith at a distance, and greatly rejoiced at the sight. This glorious vision spoke at the appointed time, but the Church waited till four thousand years rolled their round, before the wonderful Person made His appearance, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. And though that may be dark to us, no doubt the wisdom and the goodness of God will appear in the long delay. The apostacy of man was deep, and the distance between him and God was so great that the Divine wisdom saw meet to open up His great design to him gradually. Mankind were not prepared to receive this great truth all at once, and therefore God did not reveal it soon. We do not speak to children about the highest points in philosophy, or about some abstruse points in natural science. We speak to them as their weak capacities and intellects are able to bear. And if God had revealed clearly everything that happened to our Lord Jesus Christ, there is cause to believe that many of depraved mankind would act a still more shocking tragedy than they did in putting Him to death. The same judicial blindness which made the Jews to reject and crucify Him would have made them do so had the Prophecies been never so clear. God promised His people a King. He also promised them a suffering Saviour, and as they could not reconcile them, they would have acted the very part they did, and perhaps with more aggravated wickedness; and to prove this it may be asked, Can any prophecy be more clear than what our Lord says of

His Resurrection? Can anything be more certain than the accomplishment? The Jews refuse to believe, and we know that though all the Old Testament prophecies had been never so clear, the wickedness and unbelief of the Jews would have resisted their accumulated evidence. Had they examined them without prejudice they were clear, and accordingly our Lord appeals to them as bearing witness to the whole of His life and miracles. In the former chapter we have the genealogy of our Lord by a long train of ancestors up to Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation, as we have it in the 3rd of St Luke, up to the first of the human race. And though we cannot readily obviate all difficulties that may occur in these and in other dark passages of Scripture, there are several arguments that may satisfy an honest believer and serious enquirer after truth.

1st. The manner and customs of the East, and more especially with respect to adoption. Thus, for instance, after Jacob had adopted the two sons of Joseph, had some Jewish historians given us the genealogy of the tribe of Joseph, and that one said, Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the son of Jacob; and the other had said, Manasseh, the son of Jacob, they had been both right. The sacred historians give the genealogies of our Lord just as they found them, and it seems there was no fault found with them; they both proved that Jesus Christ was descended from David and Abraham. They both inform us that our Lord was born in Bethlehem, in the tribe of Judah, and this was the accomplishment of an ancient prophecy.

2nd. The Jews were the bitter enemies of Christ; and if there had been anything wrong in these genealogies they would gladly have caught hold of it, which it seems they did not. Had they been able to prove that there was a flaw in His genealogy, and that He was not descended from David, they would have got a victory, and proclaimed their triumph. This they never attempted, and though they may object to the manner the Christians explain and quote prophecies, they cannot deny but these prophecies exist.

3rd. Whatever pains learned men and commentators have been at to reconcile dark passages in the Old Testament that had to their view the appearance of error, the darkness was in their own minds, and not in the sacred pages, and this will appear very clearly from the following great consideration. Our Lord was the great Prophet of the Church whom God sent into the world. He often appeals to the writings of the Old Testament, and recommends their perusal to His hearers. He desires the Jews to search the Scriptures, and they will find several prophecies of Christ there. Now, if

there had been anything really wrong or dark in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, would not our Lord point out such errors? As He did not, we may infer that there were none. We may conclude, then, that the darkness is in our minds, and not in the Scriptures of truth. And should some slight mistake occur, owing to the oversight of transcribers in a copy in manuscript, it can be corrected by comparing it to other manuscripts. Our Lord saw nothing in the original Scriptures worthy of animadversion, and where He did not, we ought not. As to the Septuagint version, it may be considered rather as a short paraphrase than a literal translation, and where it differs from the Hebrew it may be corrected by it. Accordingly, the inspired writers of the New Testament quote Scriptures agreeably to that version.

In a word, the seeming inconsistencies that appear in the Old or New Testaments are only apparent, and not real. And if this had not been the case, Christ and His Apostles would have pointed them out.

I now proceed by Divine assistance, to explain to you the prophecies of Scripture, and the history of our Lord, as delivered by the Evangelist, St Matthew v. 1-2.

Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod, the King, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him?" The wonderful circumstances that concur about the time of Christ's birth will strike the mind with astonishment. In the preceding chapter we read of His conception by the Holy Ghost, and the witness which God Almighty bore to that signal event by sending an angel to acquaint Joseph thereof, and to confirm him, and to confirm mankind in the belief of this important truth, wise men from the East, a heavenly light to the shepherds of Bethlehem, both announcing the birth of the Prince of Peace. Now is fulfilled the prophecy, Psalm cxxxii. 6th verse. Wonderful news is heard in Epratah, and the shepherds heard it in the fields of the wood. Heaven and earth, learning and ignorance, wisdom, and simplicity, unite in bearing witness to this astonishing event. Infidelity itself will not dare to say that wise men of the East, and the shepherds of Bethlehem, fabricated such a story, or that Joseph and Mary suborned them so to do. The star that directed the wise men is new and wonderful. As they were philosophers, and had studied the wonders of nature, this surprising phenomenon excited their attention. They concluded that it portended the birth of some illustrious personage. Some such opinions prevailed among the heathen, for we

read of Caesar's star. Even among ourselves, the common people think that a sudden flash of lightning signifies the death of a great man. And here we may admire the manifold goodness of God in the different ways by which He reveals Himself to people. Philosophers are directed by a star, the shepherds are instructed by a vision of angels, and Joseph by a dream; and to this day He takes several ways to lead sinners to His Christ.

The wise men came from the East—very probably from the happy Arabia, as this country afforded the presents which were offered to our Lord. We read in Genesis that Abraham sent his children by the second marriage to the East, that is, to Arabia, which lay south-east of Judea. Besides, we read in Psalm lxxii. 10 that the Kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, and we know that this is a part of Arabia. In their journey, however, they lost sight of the star, or, what is probable, perhaps they thought they would find the Prince they were in quest of, as they were now in the land of Judea. Accordingly, they directed their course to Jerusalem, the capital, where they naturally expected to find the Royal Babe. They wish to see Him, that they may worship Him, and it is highly probable that the worship meant here is something more than that homage which is due to an earthly sovereign. But it seems that the birth of the Heavenly Babe did not excite the same sensation in the metropolis of His ancestors as it did in the wise men of the East.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW vi. 9-13

THIS is the prayer which our Lord taught His disciples, because He gave it to them as a rule by which to regulate their prayers. Though it is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, it is not so called because He used it Himself; this He could not do, as He had no sin to pray for the forgiveness of, but as it was our Lord that taught it to His followers. As we are taught this precious form of sound words from our earliest infancy, we do not see so much in it as it really contains. I compare the Lord's Prayer to a purse of gold, which a rich man puts in the hand of his friend. He knows it is money he got, but he does not see the value of it till he opens it, and then he sees that all the coin it contains is of the most precious metal. And when we begin to examine and explain these precious petitions and desires that are expressed here, we may say with truth that if any man can repeat this prayer with a true spirit of devotion, happy is it for him. The words are easily repeated, but to repeat them from the heart requires the assistance of grace. We shall therefore explain the words, and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verse 9.—Ye shall therefore pray in this manner. This shall serve as a form to direct you in your addresses to the great Majesty of Heaven. As a child repeateth after his master, we are to take special care that all our prayers be agreeable to this rule. If our prayers, and the spirit of our prayers, is contrary to the spirit and doctrine of this prayer, we do not pray agreeably to the will of God. We are then to approach the Throne of Grace with humility, with reverence, and with love. God is a Spirit, and we ought to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our Father who art in Heaven. In these words we have the doctrine of the Father and the Son. If we believe in the Son, God is our Father in covenant. Though we by nature are enemies, yet in Christ we ought to look upon God as our Father and Friend. He hath reconciled us by the blood of His Cross, and we ought to pray for His Spirit, who will enable us effectually to cry, Abba Father. There is a great deal of divinity in these two words—Our Father, and O that we could repeat them with true filial con-

fidence. It is our duty thus to look upon God in Christ; for He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And He entreats us to be reconciled to God, and receive our pardon through Christ. And if God is our Father, we are brethren, and we ought, therefore, to love one another as such. The Spirit of the Gospel is a spirit of love, and if we love God, we will naturally love our brethren, and love will naturally teach us to do them good, and to promote their temporal and spiritual interest.

He is our Father in Heaven, and this teaches us our great and glorious privileges. Scripture informs us that He is everywhere present, but His peculiar habitation is Heaven. This the habitation of His Holiness, the high and holy place where He hath erected His throne, and where He meets His people. Here an innumerable host of angels worship Him. It is here the glorified body of our Saviour is, angels, principalities and powers being subject to Him. The heavens are higher than the earth, and we may believe that the extent of them is great in proportion. The extent of this inferior creation is very great, and if God built such a large habitation for beings that are confined to bodies, how extensive are the spaces prepared for unembodied spirits, and for the pure and spiritual bodies of the saints after the Resurrection. What we can see with our bodily eyes is but a small part of creation. A man of great learning observes that if all the places upon which the sun shines were extinguished they would not be missed in the creation any more than a grain of sand from the sea shore. We only see the outskirts of creation; we live in the suburbs. The city of the Great King and the ivory palaces are hidden from our view. Our gross sight could not bear the vision of the Heavenly Canaan. And as Scripture points to us the glory of this happy place by several beautiful images, the design of all these images is to raise our thoughts and affections to the things that are above. Our thoughts are called away from this dark and dreary wilderness to a place large as our wishes, lasting as our immortal souls, and beautiful beyond the utmost stretch of imagination and thought. In this place God sits enthroned on high, and on His right hand the great Mediator, to whom and through whom we may address our prayers, and by whose prevailing intercession we may humbly look for an answer. The glorious Intercessor receives the prayers of His people, mixing them with the incense of His precious merits. As many of their petitions may not be strictly agreeable to the will of God, He sends them down again by the hands of the Holy Spirit, and when He brings them entirely to the will of God, and when His good

time arrives, He gives them an answer. As their prayers, as proceeding from them, are mixed with sin, He purifies them, and presents them to His Father; and in this way they find acceptance in the Beloved.

“Hallowed be Thy Name.”

We sanctify the name of God when we pray that veneration to His name which is due to Him. His Word reveals His name, and when we worship Him in heart and in life, we sanctify His great name. He requires worship from all His rational creatures. We therefore glorify God and sanctify His name when we confess our sins to Him, and lead a holy and a regular life.

Those who disgrace their profession by immoral lives are said in Scripture to profane His holy name, and our Saviour informs us that we glorify our Father who is in Heaven by the light of our good life, and by such works as adorn our profession.

Verse 10.—“Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” The Kingdom of God upon earth is the reign of Messiah. And this kingdom consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost. Messiah is the Prince of Peace, and His kingdom in the latter days is to extend far and wide. He is to rule from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. He is to rule the nations, for God has promised Him the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. By the nature of the promise we may understand that this is not to happen all at once. It is the work of time. Though the Kingdom is promised Him, He is desired to ask it, and He is said to sit at the right hand of God till his enemies are made His footstool. Our Lord, then, it would appear, is pleading for this promise, and He has made it our duty to plead for it also. His Kingdom has made its appearance, and these promises have been partly fulfilled, for the Gospel has made conquest in the most distant corners of the globe. Christ is worshipped from the rising to the setting sun. But if we are to believe the writers of the Old and New Testaments, His Kingdom has not yet made that glorious appearance which is to be made upon earth. Nation still lifts up sword against nation, and they still learn the art of war. If nations and individuals who profess the name of Christ were influenced by the principles which they profess to believe; they would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. When the Kingdom of God appears with glory in the general conversion of mankind, this change will literally take place; and we are taught to pray for this, and believe the promise about its accomplishment. A thousand

years is short in God's sight, though the time appears long to us. The doctrine that is to accomplish this is revealed to us in the Gospel, and when the Spirit of God will make the belief of the Gospel general, these glorious effects will soon take place. Though the Scriptures assure us of the glory of Messiah's Kingdom in the latter days, it does not say that this Kingdom would make this glorious appearance all at once. It was to be set up during the fourth monarchy, according to the Prophecy of Daniel, and this clearly refers to the Roman Empire. It was to appear like a stone cut without hands, and afterwards the stone was to become a great mountain, and to fill the whole earth. It was first to be very small, like the grain of mustard seed, and afterwards become great and powerful. So that the argument of the Jews against Christianity from the wars and bloodshed among the Christians falls to the ground. We learn from one of their own prophets that it was to destroy the fourth monarchy or Roman Empire. That its first appearance would be like a stone cut without hands, but that it would afterwards become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. Christianity thus has hitherto triumphed over all opposition, like a stone cut without hands, for nothing but the power of God could establish it in the world. Jews and Pagans, Philosophers and Rhetoricians, sensualists and worldings, the learning and the power of the world appeared against it; still, it stood its ground in the midst of all the commotions of the kingdoms of the earth. It will hereafter appear with great outward lustre and inward spiritual beauty which it has not done hitherto, for the nominal Christianity is the established religion of several kingdoms and countries in the world; they are far from being ruled by the genuine spirit of the Gospel. When societies or individuals among them breathe the true spirit of the Gospel, and appear against sin and the works of darkness among professing Christians, they meet with all the hard names that malice and falsehood can invent. Such, then, as have the glory of the Kingdom at heart are taught to pray for its prosperity in the world. The establishing of Christianity as a national religion is not what is here meant, but the saving influences of the holy spirit working repentance and bringing people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan and their own lusts, to the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace. Though the bulk of professing Christians are as bad as infidels, their false profession is an acknowledgment of Christianity, and if every individual among them believed it, we would soon see the Kingdom of God. When a genuine Christian prays for the advancement of the Kingdom of God he means something more surely than a bare profession of

Christian religion. This he sees already in the country wherein he lives, but he cannot say that the Kingdom of God is among them of a truth. He sees many of them sunk in ignorance and multitudes sunk in vice. Among those who preserve a regard for decency of character, he observes a form instead of the power of Godliness, the means substituted in place of the Saviour, and a partial kind of morality, instead of that universal obedience and true holiness which is the genuine fruit of true faith. We are then to pray for the Kingdom of God till such time as it appears upon earth, and nations as well as individuals imbibe the true spirit of the Gospel. When this event takes place there shall be no use for warlike instruments, for mankind in general shall cultivate the art of peace. There shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Whatever appearances may be now against it, this happy period is fast approaching. Two arguments put this beyond the reach of doubt. The truth of Scripture, and the many prayers of the Church of God for this happy and glorious event.

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.”

This is a rational and a pious wish, but unholy and carnal reason may suggest that, however desirable such a wish may be, the state of the world in general renders the accomplishment of it improbable, if not impracticable. But that the time is coming when the will of God will be generally obeyed in earth as it is in Heaven appears to me from the following reasons :—

1st. Our Saviour desires us to pray for such an event, and several parts of Scripture give us room to believe and hope for it. But without citing texts, let us only examine this pious wish in our Lord's Prayer, which almost every child can repeat. Would the great Teacher sent from God encourage us to pray for a thing that God never meant to do? We can never believe this. Is there any part of Scripture where people are encouraged to pray for a thing but that thing is accomplished? The return of the Jews from Egypt and Babylon is the subject of many prayers, and they would not be encouraged to pray if God did not mean to answer. Commonsense may tell us that it is not our duty to pray for what God does not intend to perform. If my friend was newly dead, I have no ground from Scripture to put up such a prayer for him as Martha did for her brother Lazarus. God encouraged the prayers of Hezekiah and Jehoshaphat against their enemies. And we know the consequence. He taught His people by the Prophet Hosea what form of prayer to use,

and there is a gracious answer, as we read in the last chapter of his Prophecies. And would this petition or wish be put in the mouth of the Church for several centuries without any prospect of an answer? Would God Almighty tantalise the hopes of His people? Is it not said in Scripture that He is gracious to the gracious and upright to the upright? We can say with truth that His people have been very upright in praying that the will of God might be done upon earth, and His Kingdom come in the conversion of Jews and Gentiles to the Christian faith. Himself has taught us to pray for this, and may we not conclude, that He means, "sooner or later," to answer all those prayers of His people. He teaches us to pray for our daily bread, and is it not our duty to believe that we shall obtain this? We surely may look for it when He desires us to pray for it, and this is our duty. And if it be our duty to look for the daily bread when God encourages us to pray for it, shall unbelief or carnal reason make me doubt but God will answer a prayer of unspeakably greater consequence—the general spread of true religion through the world?

2nd. The united wishes and prayers of the people of God encourages me to look for the event. There is no desire, natural or spiritual, among people but has some correspondent object. The philosophers make use of the argument to prove the immortality of the soul and a future state. They tell us there is a strong desire implanted in the soul after such a state, and they thought it rational to suppose that God would grant that desire. The general desire in people after immortality is one of the proofs of a future state. Now, this wish for a general spread of the Gospel through the earth is not merely the desire of one here and there, but the general wish of all true Christians: it is natural to them. And will this strong and general wish be frustrated? It is not such a wish as Moses had for going to Canaan, or Abraham for Ishmael; it is a common and general wish. I could believe that upon occasions a few of the people of God might be wrong in their opinion, or form a wrong wish or desire; but is it agreeable to reason or Scripture to suppose that the whole of the world continues in all ages to have a wish not agreeable to the will of God? Religion is the most precious thing upon earth, and such as experience the power of it upon their own souls wish that it may become a general blessing to mankind. I conclude, then, that their prayers will be answered in the latter days, when all nations shall be converted.

3rd (lastly).—It appears to me that the glory of God requires that this should be the case. Satan has got his will over mankind in general, and he ruleth powerfully and effectually in the children of disobedience. They do his will

and obey his motions. And though there has been a revelation of the will of God given to mankind, the greater part of them are ignorant of it, and such as have it and hear it, refuse to obey. May not the enemy brag that he divideth the earth with the Son of God, and that the greater part of mankind are obedient to his will? But the day will come when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Satan is a usurper, and will be dispossessed. Hitherto the cause of vice seemed to triumph. Hereafter the cause of God and religion will triumph and prosper. We read of a new heaven and a new earth. That God will cleanse this earth for the use and service of His people seems to be the doctrine of Scripture, and from the strong language of the Prophets and Apostles, this earth will be the very image of heaven. The will of God will then be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11th Verse—"Give us this day our daily bread."

The generality of the people of God in all ages have been but in ordinary circumstances, and many of them in straitened circumstances. They are then taught to depend upon their Heavenly Father for their bodily food. As the Israelites in the wilderness had a daily portion of manna for their food, that they might constantly depend upon God, we are here desired to ask our daily bread. The Israelites had a livelihood of the manna, for it lasted forty years; but they were allowed but little for every day. Good people often wish to lay by money. This it would appear in many cases is not good for them. When the Israelites gathered manna to lay by, it bred worms and stank. What was kept for Sabbath and what was laid up in the golden pot did not.

If Godly people that should depend upon God, and are taught their duty by the leadings of Providence, are not satisfied if they do not lay by money, they may obtain their wish; but it may breed worms, and give them vexation. We are sometimes surprised that the substance of good creatures that was laid by in an honest way should melt away as the snow before the rain. Whatever comes of the substance of the wicked? To this I answer, that God is a jealous God, and though their souls are saved as by fire, yet the instrument of their idolatry must be destroyed. If we seek the Kingdom of God we shall obtain all other things that are necessary for us, and this should satisfy us, for He will never forsake us.

Verse 12.—"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The great design of the grace of God is to break the power of sin in our hearts, and bring down the pride of our nature. The work of grace is to bring our will to the will

of God, and He will require us to deny our own wills and seek the Divine glory in everything. Pride and anger have taken strong hold of our nature, and when we receive an injury or insult, whether real or imaginary, we are very ready to resent it, and return injury for injury. The reverse of this spirit and conduct is the doctrine of the Gospel. We are to forgive injuries, and pray for our enemies; and till we do this we are not to expect forgiveness. In the nature of things we are not in a fit frame of soul for obtaining mercy while we retain sentiments of anger and revenge against our brother. Our complaint may be just and the injury we receive may be great, but still we are to bring our injuries to the foot of the cross. God promises to throw our sins in the sea, and we are to throw our injuries in the sea likewise. If in injuring us they have discovered a spirit of enmity and ill-will against the cause of God and religion, they are still greater objects of pity. By praying for our rancorous and bitter enemies we show ourselves to be actuated by the spirit of the meek and impassionate Saviour, who said upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It will prove us to be the children of God, as the contrary spirit of revenge will prove that we remain yet strangers to the grace of God of a truth.

Verse 13—"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, power, and glory, for ever. Amen."

Sin is the greatest of all evils, and the cause of every evil, and every other evil, that meets us. With regard to temporal things, we are to be resigned to the will of God whether we pray for or against them; but in praying against sin and temptation to sin we are to pray absolutely and with all our heart and soul. We are to pray against temptation to sin, and if the temptation is permitted, we are at all events to pray against our yielding to temptations. We are to pray earnestly that God would not give us up to the lust of our own hearts, and that He would keep us from those sins which are agreeable to the bent of our corrupt nature. And if God answers us in the petition it is a great mercy, and we should humbly thank Him. Let not our sullen pride refuse to do this by saying that this is no more than restraining grace. Be it so. Let His name be praised for restraining grace, and let us wait and look for sanctifying and saving grace. Neither let us yield to unbelief who whispers to us that we shall one day fall into the hands of Saul. The God who hitherto hath taken care of us will never leave nor forsake us, and He will be our Guide, even unto death. Let us trust in His grace.

And we are to conclude our prayers by ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to God. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and He will reign for ever and ever; and to express our faith and hope, let us say, Amen.

Inferences.—1st. If this is a rule by which to direct our prayers, let us examine our prayers, whether we live according to our prayers, and whether we can honestly repeat our own petitions. If we live in malice or envy, can we pray for pardon of our own offences. If our lives are contrary to the Gospel, can we say, Thy kingdom come? And if our will is in direct opposition to the will of Heaven, can we consistently say, Thy will be done? And if we live in sin, are we sincere when we say, And lead us not into temptation? 2nd. If we are sincere, our own endeavours will co-operate with our prayers. For instance, we pray for the Kingdom of God, and that His will may be done on earth, as well as in Heaven. If a physician was praying for the life and health of his patient, will he not give him the medicines that will be of service to him? And if we pray for the salvation of people's souls, will not our advices and endeavours do something to rescue their souls from sin? 3rd. Scripture says that the Kingdom of God will appear gloriously upon earth. Though this is not accomplished, let not infidelity shake our confidence in Divine promises. His time is not yet come, but is drawing near. Let us then wait with faith and patience.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW viii. 1-17

WE read in the Book of Exodus vii. 9, that when Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, demanded a miracle as a proof of the divine mission of Moses, that he was empowered to work such astonishing works as struck Pharaoh and the Egyptians with terror and dismay. Now, Moses was a type of the great Prophet who was to come into the world. He was to be like Moses in many things, more especially in the splendour of His miracles. Accordingly, when our Lord began to preach, He gave full proof of His heavenly mission by a continued series of the most salutary and beneficial miracles. The works recorded in this very chapter prove to us beyond contradiction that He was the Son of God with power. The first miracles of Moses were turning his rod into a serpent and the water into blood. The first miracle of Christ was turning water into wine. We shall speak a little upon this precious portion of Scripture, and conclude, as usual, with some practical remarks.

Verses 1, 2, 3, 4.—“When He was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed Him. And behold there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.’ And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, ‘I will : be thou clean.’ And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.”

The leprosy was a very loathsome disease, and more particularly so in warm climates. In many cases it was perfectly incurable. The miserable victims of the disease were in very distressed circumstances. They were obliged to sequester themselves from society, and were avoided by their nearest and dearest friends. As the disease was very loathsome, it would appear that it was likewise very infectious. And in this respect it was a true emblem of sin. That spiritual malady excludes people from the presence of God and the society of the saints. A person labouring under this disease made application to our Lord immediately after His

descent from the Mount. Though our Lord veiled His Divinity, it sometimes, nay, oftentimes, broke forth through His humanity in the glorious works He performed. The leper worshipped Him, and this He did not refuse, for it was His essential right. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Though He did not appear with that outward glory which He showed in the Shechinah and in the pillar of cloud and fire, yet He showed as much of it as drew the attention of mankind. Numbers from the neighbouring countries flocked after Him, and were cured of their several diseases. Among the rest, a leper presented himself before Him. And if we observe his language it is such as will arise in the heart of the sinner who gets a view of the plague and leprosy of his heart and life. The poor leper was nauseous in his own sight, and he might probably think that his very appearance would offend the eyes of the Saviour, and accordingly he had some doubts in the willingness of the Saviour to cure him. And how often have we doubtful thoughts, either of His good-will, or of His ability, or of both? And this arises from the nature and malignity of our disease. But behold the event. He had compassion upon him, raised His hand and cured him immediately. And from this circumstance we may see that no disease, however malignant, can stand before the touch of Christ. He cured him instantaneously, and thus showed His Divine power. His cures were not partial, for He perfectly healed him. How soon the leper was healed our Lord desired him to conceal the cure for the time. Our Lord commanded some to conceal for a time the benefit they received, and He commanded the demoniac that was cured to publish his cure abroad. He was best judge of what was for His own glory and the good of souls. What may be a duty in one man may be a sin in another, according to the circumstances in which they may be placed. In general, it is a duty upon every Christian to pray privately in his closet. But it was Daniel's duty to show publicly that he prayed to the God of heaven. Some persons whom our Lord commanded to conceal His miracles sinned by their disobedience. He surely meant to cure some wrong bent in their minds by giving them such injunctions. It is the sinful infirmity of some that they can conceal nothing they hear. And this might be the sin of the persons mentioned in the Gospel. It is the credit of a man and of a Christian to conceal a thing delivered to him under the seal of secrecy. If he tells the secret he ought to be avoided by every honest man. A person in anguish of spirit for his sins may tell his case to a man he looks upon as a Christian. How, then, will it wring his soul with distress if he hears his secret has been divulged? The person that can be capable of such breach of trust is guilty of a crime for which I have no name.

When he breaks a trust he generally tells a lie, and no man should trust him hereafter. But though he desires him to conceal his cure for the time from the public, He desires him to go and tell it to the priest, and to offer his gift according to the law of Moses. And this was to be a testimony to them. Our Lord performed several such cures. And this evidence of the Divine mission of our Lord and Saviour would come with irresistible force upon the consciences of the priests. They could not but confess the Divine power of the Saviour, and thus they became His followers. And if they resisted the remonstrances of their own consciences, they were self-condemned. In either case the offering of the leper served for a testimony. In like manner every sinner that is converted is an evidence of the truth of Scripture. It proves the truth of Scripture to his own soul, for conversion is the greatest of all miracles mentioned in the Gospel. If the Gospel converts a man he has the same proof of its Divinity which the leper had.

Verses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.—“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said—Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say unto this man, Go and he goeth, and to another, Come and he cometh, and to my servant, do this and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way, and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour.”

We have here the remarkable history of the centurion. Some years before this time, Judea was reduced into a Roman province. And though the Jews were in a state of servitude, some of their rulers used them with humanity. The centurion here was a man of an excellent character. And though in the former part of his life he seems to have been an idolater, it would appear from what we read here about him that he had read the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and that he had correct sentiments of the Messiah whom the Jews

expected. It is said of him that he loved the nation of the Jews and had built them a synagogue. At any rate, he made good use of the light he had, and this prepared him to receive the Gospel. He had heard about Christ, and it would seem not only that he looked upon him as a great Man, but that he looked upon Him to be something more than man from the manner in which he addressed him.

The centurion's servant was sick of a palsy, and in great torment with his sickness. He, therefore, sent word to our Lord to come and heal him. When our Lord consented to come and heal the servant, the Centurion acknowledged with humility his own unworthiness that Christ would come under his roof. He believed that Christ could as easily cure him with a word of His power as it was for him who had some little authority in the Roman army to command one of the soldiers or servants to do such or such a thing.

The faith of the centurion struck our Lord with wonder, and He acknowledged that He did not find such faith, not even in Israel. The visible Church at that time from Dan even to Beersheba, or at any rate the Kingdom of the ten tribes, did not produce such an instance as the Roman Centurion. Upon this our Lord observed that He was to collect a Church from the four corners of the earth, who were to be partakers of the privileges enjoyed by the great ancestors of the Jewish nation. And that the Jews themselves, who are here called the children of the Kingdom, were to be excluded. They were to be cast into outer darkness, where was weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. They had a foretaste of that awful state for upwards of seventeen centuries. At this very time they are in the case emphatically described by the Prophet Isaiah viii. 21—"And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry, and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry they shall fret themselves and curse their King, and their God, and look upward."

In the misery and straitness the Jews experience in their own country, instead of being humbled for their national sin of crucifying the Son of God, their custom is to curse and blaspheme the Lord Jesus Christ. The awfulness of their rejection and thick spiritual darkness is an emblem of the place of torment. They are excluded from the light of heaven and the comfort of grace. It is likely that the reprobate shall be on the outside of the creation, where they shall not enjoy any kind of light. Let those, then, who reject and despise the Gospel, consider the strength of this awful argument. The day is coming when the bodily organ called the eye will not yield them light. And if their souls shall then be destitute of the light of grace, what can they expect but that they shall

deplore with unavailing sorrow their own misery for ever. Their state shall then be like the unhappy gentleman upon the bed of death, who acknowledged it would be a relief to him if the flames of hell would hide him from the presence of God. And we may learn from Scripture that the presence of God hereafter will frighten the wicked more than the flames that will consume and destroy the world around them. Alas, what pleasure can their feasting, their music, and their dancing afford the wicked in that day? After our Lord had given the awful doctrine to the wicked, He turns with comfort to the Centurion, and assured him that his prayer was answered, for his servant was healed in the self-same hour.

From these words we see the great benefit and blessing of faith. The faith of God's people is serviceable, not only to themselves, but also to others, for "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And why are such instances recorded in holy Scripture but to encourage the faithful in all ages to be assiduous and persevering in Prayer. The Centurion was heard, and so shall we, in proportion to our faith. And if our Lord was willing to hear His people when praying for a cure to bodily diseases, how much more willing is He to lend a gracious ear to their prayers when they pray for a cure to the spiritual diseases of sinners? Stephen prayed for his persecutors, and the next thing we hear is the conversion of St Paul. And such spiritual miracles we are encouraged to expect in every age of the Church. And blessed be God, we, now and then, see such cures. Is there any here of the people of God who has any near relations or friends sick of a spiritual palsy? Is he unable and unwilling to turn to God and serve Him? Is he a glutton or a drunkard, or a Sabbath-breaker? Yet do not despair. Go and lay his case before your Saviour with very great humility. You have heard that the graceless children of godly parents have been converted. And why would you not hope that God may cast an eye of pity and sympathy upon your wicked child also? Go and try.

Verses 14-15.—"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother laid and sick of a fever. And He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered unto them."

We read in the beginning of the chapter that our Lord cured a loathsome disease, the leprosy, and that He cured the palsy, a disease that weakens the body and renders a person unfit for the duties of his calling. He now cures Peter's mother-in-law of a fever. And sin is like a complication of diseases; but our Lord cured all manner of diseases. He did so instantaneously, and this was different from what a

physician could do. We know that after persons cool, and are upon the mending-hand, it takes them some time before they fully recover. But this woman recovers all at once, and is able to conduct the ordinary business of the house. And these instances should encourage us to pray to our Lord for a cure, whether we look upon our sin as a leprosy, a palsy, or a fever, or a complication of the three. A touch or a word can cure us. He cured the centurion's servant with a word, because the centurion had great faith.

Verses 16-17.—“When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.”

We learn from Pagan writers that the power of Satan was very great in the heathen world. He had the impudence to get temples erected for himself and for other unclean spirits, his followers. And they gave answers that astonished them to their poor, deluded votaries. And scripture informs us that they took violent possession of the souls and bodies of several miserable objects whom they greatly distressed. But our Lord cured them, and cast out the devils with a word. They came with these objects at an unseasonable hour, as the sun was setting. Some think that it was the Sabbath day, and that it was not over till the sunset, and then another day began in the evening. But, however unseasonable the hour, our Lord did not refuse to cure those who were brought to Him. And is not this encouragement to us to go to our Saviour, even when the sun is setting. We should not despair of old sinners or of great sinners. Even persons possessed with devils are cured. And we see some people furiously bent upon the prosecution of their lusts. The language of hell is in their mouth, and they seem to strive who will serve the world and the devil most. As if God was like the dumb idols of the heathen: they do not worship Him in their families, and they sin as if they were not to give any account hereafter. And some sinners seem as if they bid defiance to heaven. The Sabbath is their day for bargaining, for journeying, for visiting, and feasting. These desperate sinners are very near the curse mentioned in Isaiah xxii. 14. The devil has got full possession of them, and yet we should not despair of God's mercy. Jesus Christ cast out devils. And who knows but He may reserve mercy for such characters, though their case is very desperate indeed. It is likewise said that our Lord healed any that were sick, and this was

an accomplishment of a prophecy of Esaias concerning Him, namely, Isaiah liii. 4—"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Now, He did this in two respects—

First, He bore our sins, and sin is the cause of every trouble and affliction that can befall us. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and His life all along was a suffering life. His sufferings were necessary from the cradle to the cross.

Second. Again, He bore the sickness of the people by the trouble He was at in curing them. He felt as a man, and it must be a prodigious burden to Him the healing of so many nauseous and awful diseases. This must have been a burden to Him, as He was a man, and here we are told He bare the burden of our infirmities and sicknesses. However much fatigued He may have been by preaching and curing diseases, no sooner did new objects present themselves, but He immediately waited on them without murmuring, and cured them of their diseases.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. The miracles of Christ are one proof of the Divinity of the Gospel.

It was prophesied of Him—Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6—"Thus the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." We know that these happy effects were produced by the Gospel. And thus we have a double proof of the truth of the Gospel prophecy and miracle. And if we wish for the greatest proof of all, let us earnestly pray for that. He promises the new heart, and when this is accomplished, our eyes shall see spiritually and truly that Christ is the Pearl of Great Price. Our ears shall hear His voice, and our feet shall cheerfully run the way of His commandments. Let us ask this precious Faith.

2. We have seen the efficacy of faith in procuring blessings for others, and this should induce us to pray for ourselves.

Though Scripture does not encourage us to look for miraculous cures for our bodies, it encourages us to pray for a cure to the spiritual maladies of our souls. And though we should feel doubts of His good-will or ability to save, as the poor leper or blind persons did, yet let us come with our sinful doubtings that He may remove them, and let us throw ourselves at the feet of our Saviour that He may cure us of all our diseases.

Lastly, it is great encouragement to us that He has cured others, and He can heal us also.

We are surrounded with a cloud of witnesses. The Gospel assures us that He has cured many of their diseases. And every age of the Church informs us that He has sanctified and saved great sinners. And He is calling upon us to believe. It animated a poor blind man when it was said to him, "Be of good comfort, rise, He calleth thee" (Mark x. 49).

Let us, then, imitate the blind man by casting away the garment of unbelief and the darling sin, and let us rise and come to Jesus Christ.

May God bless His Word to our souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW viii. 18-34

I PROCEED to explain the rest of the chapter.

Verses 18, 19, 20—"Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto Him, The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

The splendour of His miracles and the power of His doctrine brought many after our Saviour. We are, however, here informed that when He saw great multitudes about Him that He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. This, at first sight, might seem a little strange. The business of our Lord into the world was to save lost sinners, and to do good to the souls and bodies of men. And one would think that when He saw a vast crowd gathered round Him that He had a great field for doing good. Instead, however, of waiting to preach to them, He left them abruptly, and went to the other side of the lake. St Mark observes it was in the evening (Mark iv. 35). But He knew where His duty lay at the time. He said once to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know it hereafter." And this is the language of every dispensation of providence which we do not comprehend at the time. Our Lord saw further than men did. There were two miserable objects on the other side that were possessed with devils. To heal them immediately was the first and the great duty. And as to the multitude whom he left behind, they suffered no loss, for their desire after His heavenly doctrine was rather increased than diminished by His leaving them for a short time. And though there may be delay in the answer to our prayer, we suffer nothing by the delay. God will come to us time enough. There are others of His people that stand more in need. If we saw a house on fire we might leave the duties of public worship and give our help. Such was the state of the possessed. Meantime a certain scribe accosted our Lord with an offer of his services. Our Lord, who saw his motives, answered him according to what was in his heart. The current doctrine at that time was

that the Messiah was to be a great worldly conqueror. It was believed by their public teachers that He was to bring the world under subjection to his countrymen, the Jews. Full of these carnal ideas, this man applied to our Lord and told Him he would follow Him. And many would still follow Him if they thought He would make them rich and powerful. But He who came to enlighten mankind and make known to them the Divine will, would not suffer him for a moment to labour under such a mistake. He told him at once that he need not expect posts and pensions from Him—that as His kingdom was not of this world, He did not promise His followers riches or honours in the world. Himself was a poor and suffering Saviour. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. If they did not, therefore, wait with patience till He introduced them into the Kingdom He promised His followers, it was in vain for them to follow Him, expecting a kingdom of earthly delights. And this may teach us one essential duty and truth. It is this, that we should weigh what we are doing before we take up a profession or promise that we shall follow the Saviour.

This same scribe blindly promised to follow Him. And how many foolishly do so to this day. But when the trial comes and the old lusts and love of the world begin to solicit attention, they begin to repent of what they promised. They break their promises and tell lies. They grudge the Saviour the self-denial and attendance of all the means of grace which their salvation requires at their hands. When he heard what he had to expect, he left his religion there, for anything that appears in the Gospel concerning him. Alas ! what an enemy to the soul is the allurements of riches. There are many such instances : there are many professors of this man's spirit.

Verses 21, 22 — “And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me and let the dead bury their dead.”

The care of the soul is the first duty, and to this we should attend above all things. At first view, we would naturally think that what this man asked was a duty which the very light of nature would dictate to him, namely, to bury his father. But we find our Lord forbade him, and surely he saw danger to the man's soul, else He would not give such a command. Our Lord saw farther than man could do, and, therefore, he gave him the necessary caution. He knew the character and sentiments of those who would meet him at the burial, the language they would have, and the arguments they would use. And He saw the weakness of the man's mind to

resist such temptation, and, therefore, forbade him to go. And this part of our Lord's doctrine may teach us this necessary duty, that when anything whatever is likely to prove a snare to our souls, we ought to avoid the snare and the temptation (Levit. xxi. 10). And if persons venture beyond their strength it is just that they would be permitted to fall. Our corrupt nature is ready like a tinder-box to take fire at the slightest temptation, and we should, therefore, avoid great temptation, and especially if it has a strong fleshly argument to support it. If a rich man of very bad practices solicits the beautiful daughter of a poor man to engage in his service, telling her that if she does so he will take care of her poor old weak parents, the temptation is strong. But when her godly relation, who sees the snare which she did not suspect, tells her not to go upon any account, but to lean her old parents on the care of that kind providence who hitherto took care of them, she takes his wholesome advice and saves her soul. Some such danger our Lord saw, and warned His disciples.

Verses 24, 25, 26, 27—"And when He was entered into a ship His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves : but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith ? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him ?"

Since our Lord appeared in a public character as the Teacher sent from God and the Saviour of the world, there is scarcely a step He takes but is attended with some wonderful or good thing. When He entered the ship some of His disciples followed Him, and we find that such of His disciples as follow Him in the most difficult duties see more of His wonders, though they meet with greater trials. No sooner do they enter the ship than a great storm arises. If we venture our all upon Christ our main interest will be safe and secure. But storms and tempests may arise, and seem to endanger everything. And what is very remarkable, our Lord acts as if He were without any concern about them. He was asleep, and did not seem to know the trouble His poor disciples were in. But His providence watched over them. And His Church has been often in a similar situation. His Church has been often overwhelmed with the waves, and her Lord as if He had been fast asleep. And here one cannot help being a little angry at the disciples. Why are they afraid and Christ so very near them in the vessel ? Alas ! we are as often to

blame for such unbelief. As He is God, He is always near us in trouble, and He never slumbers nor sleeps; but how often does unbelief sink us as if He never did anything for us ! But the disciples were perfectly right in applying to Him alone. And here we may observe that however high the wind, however boisterous the waves were, the ship in which our Lord was could not sink, but came safe to land. And in a spiritual view this will happen to all His people. He has promised and engaged to his Father to bring them all safe to PORT. It is said the captain of the vessel in which the Doge of Venice goes to be married to the sea, gives such a promise about his vessel and crew. However foolish the promise in the one case may be, it is certain that our Lord Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him, for He ever liveth to make intercession for them. And when they came safe to land, well might they all say—"What kind of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him !" And when our Lord brings His people safe to heaven, well may they say, "What kind of man is this ?" He is the Great Man—the God-Man, whom the redeemed shall celebrate with songs of praise through all eternity. How shall they adore Him with gratitude and love for the great work of redemption and the salvation of their souls for ever ! Another observation arising from the words is this—Though our Lord was asleep, the disciples were awake. And while the watchmen in Israel are awake upon the walls of Zion in the night, and while the people of God pray, the Church, however oppressed, cannot sink. Though our unbelieving fears might point out the Saviour as if He were asleep, let us cry to Him to help, heal, and save. It is the complaint of the Church of old that He was asleep. And when He has this appearance in His providence, the business of faith and prayer is to awaken him. And when He awakens, He will arise, He will strike His enemies and help His friends.

Verses 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34—"And when He was come into the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying—What have we to do with Thee, Jesus Thou Son of God; art thou come hither to torment us before the time ? And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine, and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them

fled, and went their way into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw Him they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.”

The place where this miracle was wrought was in the neighbourhood of the two cities, Gadara and Gergesena. This miracle accounts for the haste our Lord was in to cross the lake. As to the other miracles we read of, it may be said that our Lord was solicited to perform them. But in the present case He was moved only by His free and sovereign grace. It may be said that many are converted after many prayers are put up to heaven in their behalf. And this has happened to the wicked children of good men. But others have been converted who were the children of the wicked, and themselves mere devils incarnate. Perhaps none ever prayed for them, and yet sovereign grace plucked them like brands out of the fire. They could not and would not come to Christ; but He came to them. Such was the case of the poor demoniacs of Gadara or Gergesa. They were objects of terror in their dwelling in the tombs. But Jesus knew where they were, and pitied them. The blind men put themselves in His way, but He Himself went the way of the poor demoniacs to meet them.

He meets some of His elect people in the use of the means of grace. But others He saves by His sovereign mercy. He is found of them that sought Him not, and such was the case here. The devils had taken strong possession of them, and were very unwilling to leave their habitations. When the Saviour came, the devils trembled and suspected, and asked if He came to destroy them before the time. But, understanding their fate and that they were to be expelled, rather than be without anything, they ask permission to enter into the swine. Permission is granted them to punish the covetousness of their greedy owners. If they were heathens, they deserved this for ridiculing the law of God and keeping swine. If they were apostate Jews they deserved it still more, for they knew the sow was an unclean creature and not fit for food, though greed made them feed swine to make profit of them among the neighbouring nations.

The design of all the miracles of Christ was to do good to the souls and bodies of men. The cure of the poor demoniacs and the story of the swine must have struck all that heard it. And, however petrified with the love of the world the owners of the swine were, their consciences must have told them that they got what they deserved. And whatever stroke wicked men get for the punishment of their sins,

whether they acknowledge it or not, something within them must whisper to them that this is but an earnest of more, unless they repent. But some have an incorrigible spirit. Instead of turning to God, the men of the city beg of the Saviour that He would leave their coasts. And this is the language of the hearts of many covetous men to this day. It would give them pleasure if the places of worship and kirkyards were folds for sheep, and that there were no faithful teachers to terrify their consciences for their sins.

The unhappy Gadarenes or Gergesenes (Luke viii. 35) beg of the Saviour to leave their coasts. Their unhappy prayer was granted. How many Gaderene or Gergesene prayers are this day in Scotland? And God is granting in judgment an answer to such prayers. There were many townships in the Highlands of Scotland where the voice of prayer was heard, where we see nothing but sheep. Christ has left the place at their desire. But now it may be asked, What did the Gadarenes gain by parting with Christ? They turned off Christ, and they also lost their swine. The profit they make by substituting the bleating of sheep for the sound of prayer, will have the fate of the swine of the Gadarenes. Such profit will perish in the waters. Though people do not believe the Word of God, they must believe their eyes and their ears. In a certain district of praying people in Scotland, a certain man turned them adrift, and it is well known that he died a beggar and a fool (Jer. xvii. 11, and Luke xii. 20), and this verifies both the Old and the New Testament. And if persons had not been hardened by the devil and by the love of the world, they would be afraid to turn poor families adrift. The rising generation will see the history of the Gadarene swine awfully verified. The profit made at the expense of poor families shall last but short, and run down headlong, and be drowned in the waters. Whatever profit is made by sacrilege and oppression will have a bad end. The Gadarenes might remember the day they bid farewell to Christ. And worldlings will remember with terror the day they bought the groans of the poor, and brought the curse of God into their families. It would appear that God raised them up as He raised Pharaoh, that the justice of God might be seen in their punishment. Their money shall perish and their memory shall rot.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. We see the danger of a superficial profession.

Many promise very fair, like the scribes, because they do not know their own hearts. They are strangers to the strength of their corruptions, and still more to the nature of true

religion. No wonder though such turn their backs upon Christ and His service. Let us then examine our motives, and see if we have a heart for His work.

2. Again, we see the danger that people may sometimes be in of being led into sin under the appearance of duty.

The man that wished to bury his father thought he was doing his duty. Christ saw otherwise. And this shows us the necessity of prayer, watchfulness and self-diffidence. We must look up for direction in everything, great or small.

3. Have we delivered ourselves and our interest, temporal and spiritual, to Christ? If so, whatever may be the appearance of providence, we are secure.

The ship Christ was in was as safe when covered with the waves as when it came to shore. In the cold, piercing month of December we believe that we shall soon experience the warm and pleasant breezes of spring. Such is the faith of the Christian.

Lastly—Matthew calls this the country of the Ger-gesenes; Mark and Luke, the country of the Gadarenes.

It was the same country the three evangelists meant; but it was in the neighbourhood of the cities of Gadara and Ger-gesa. And it seems that the whole district, city and country, solicit Christ to leave their coasts. How awful, how ominous their prayers; what a judgment upon them to grant their request! And here we may see what are the sins people indulge, when they wish for the removal of the Gospel.

1. Mere love of the world, when people, like the swine of the Gadarenes, can relish nothing but the trash of this world, and cannot endure to entertain any serious thought about eternity.

2. Security in the kind of happiness they enjoy, as if it was to last for many years, like the fool mentioned in Luke xii. 19.

3. Sensuality, also much indulgence of bodily pleasures (Job. xxi. 11, 12 and 13, and Isaiah xxii. 12, 13 and 14).

Lastly, a dumb kind of despair (Ezek. xxxiii. 10). They have gone on in a course of sin, and, therefore, now think it vain to repent and turn to God. Like the devils, they are afraid the Gospel would torment them before the time. They love their swinish lusts better than Christ.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW ix. 1-38

THE Gospel is always attended with power less or more to this day. Where it is believed it is sure to do good to the souls and bodies of men. Though we have no ground to expect bodily miracles, we may always look for power to heal cuts and to cure their distempers. And we are sure that if people lived up to the rules of the Gospel it would prevent many bodily diseases, and make our lives easy and comfortable. Serenity of mind, contentment with our lot, and peace of conscience proceeding from the love of God in Jesus Christ would conduce to our health and long life. And surely this is one of the blessings of the Gospel.

I proceed, then, in the usual manner to explain the words, and conclude with some practical remarks in the way of improvement.

Verse 1—"And He entered into a ship, and passed over and came into His own city."

In consequence of the awful request of the Gadarenes, who loved their swine better than the Gospel, He left them in a deplorable condition. How dreadful the case to be deprived of Christ and of the world at the same time. This is one of the bitter fruits of despising the Gospel.

"He came to His own city."

We read in the 4th chapter of Luke of the usage He met with from the people of Nazareth. He left them, therefore, and came to dwell in Capernaum. We might naturally say, happy city which was chosen by the Son of God as His habitation. And the people of Capernaum might have been happy if the fault had not been in themselves. What particular reason induced our Lord to dwell there it is not for us absolutely to say. Whatever was the reason, we know it was a good one. The district in which Capernaum was situated was one of the most pleasant and fertile and happy spots upon earth. Near Capernaum there was a pleasant and wholesome fountain of clear water. Now we know that our Lord, like the prophets of old, who were types of Him, taught by emblems, types, and parables. We are told that He sent

the man upon whose eyes He put the clay to wash in the Pool of Siloam. And St John informs us that the interpretation of Siloam is sent (John ix.). Now, our Lord in Scripture is called Song of Songs (4th chapter, 15th verse), a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. And might not our Lord teach them by dwelling in Capernaum that He Himself, and not the beautiful fountain of Capernaum, was the true well of living waters. But He was not long in Capernaum when He was applied to for a cure.

Verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7—"And behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts : For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk ? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house. And he arose and departed into his house."

People came from all quarters to see the Saviour, and to be healed of their different diseases. A poor man sick of the palsy, who could not come himself, was carried by his friends in his bed, and laid before the Lord. Our Lord saw their faith, and their faith was not put to shame. We are not to suppose when so much is ascribed to faith in Scripture that faith itself is the cause of such extraordinary effects, but that faith is the channel or organ by which such cure, bodily and spiritually, was effected. And it is a sure fact that when God works the faith, He will work the cure. If we believe He will work. If we pray with faith, something will follow. Our Lord tells the sick man some very cheerful news that his sins were forgiven. He first cures the soul, and then the person. But we see that our Lord is found fault with, and accused of blasphemy. The best things we can do or say are blamed by the wicked. Such is the malignant nature of sin that it is only offended with what God does, for He always does good. Their minds were blinded with prejudiced thoughts against our Lord, and, therefore, some of the scribes spoke against Him, not considering that the prophet Nathan told King David that his sin was forgiven. And if they considered him only as a prophet He would have this power. But He had much more, for He could pardon sin. And to convince them that He had this power while He was conversant upon earth, He proved that He healed and pardoned his soul by healing his

body. Accordingly, He ordered him to rise, take up his bed, and go to his house. And this he did immediately. Before He performed the miracle they might be persuaded of His all-seeing eye, for He told them the thoughts of their hearts, as He was God. And He now convinced them of His power, by bestowing health and strength upon a poor paralytic.

Verse 8—"But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such power to men."

Though the faith of the multitude did not ascend as far as it ought, yet they could not but acknowledge that God had given Him the power of working miracles. But they might have observed that a Divine power resided in this Man, which they never saw or heard of before. There was no such power in Moses, or in any of the old prophets. They could not prophecy or work miracles any time they pleased, as our Lord could. The Shechinah was in Him continually, and this they might observe. We may likewise observe that the multitude did not glorify God for hearing that the paralytic's sins were pardoned. This they could not see, but when they saw him take up his bed and go home to his own house, this struck them with astonishment, and, therefore, they glorified God. Something similar to this will always happen. Men cannot see the work of the Spirit of God upon a Christian's soul, and they cannot discern faith and repentance in his heart. But they can see the effects of faith and love in His life and conversation. They can see and experience His good works, and for these they can glorify God, and give him credit for his profession of religion. Faith does good to a man's own soul, and works will do good to the souls and bodies of others.

Verse 9—"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom : and He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed Him."

Our Lord wrought several miracles upon the bodies of men, and it was with a view to the good of their souls. Indeed, His miraculous cures of the bodies of men were comparatively of little value. The cure made them comfortable and happy for a few years. But what was this in comparison to the health of the soul, which was to last for ever ? He converted persons and healed their souls with a single word. He said to Matthew here, "Follow me." The call was instantly obeyed, for it came with power, and was, therefore, effectual. The covetous worldling, the sinful publican, in a moment becomes a saint and a follower of Christ. He left his bags of money, and whoever knows the heart of a worldling will

acknowledge that the power which effected this change was as great as the power that raised Lazarus from the dead.

Verses 10, 11, 12, 13—"And it came to pass as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Matthew gave a proof of the sincerity of his conversion, for he made a feast for Christ and His disciples, at which were present a number of publicans and sinners. The convert was now indifferent to the world and to all the profits arising from his plan. He had the world about him just as Elijah had his mantle, ready to part with it at the least call from Christ. And this is the great thing the Gospel requires (Acts v. 4). We may believe this was a happy feast, a dinner at which Jesus Christ did preside. Here was nothing irregular or wrong, and yet the Pharisees, the inveterate enemies of Christ, find fault with Christ for being the table companion of such characters. With His usual dignity, mixed with the most perfect humility, He soon silenced their unjust, illiberal cavil. He appeals to the writings of their prophets (Hos. vi. 6, and I. Sam. 15), men for whom they pretended to have great respect (Jer. vii. 22).

The doctrine of the prophets is that God prefers mercy to sacrifice. Though the ceremonial law was of great authority yet mercy was a greater duty. The necessity of hunger made David break the ceremonial law. It was a duty to save himself and his followers from death. But it was an act of still greater mercy in our Lord to save the souls of poor publicans from spiritual death. Though they were publicans and sinners, He saw that they were disposed to hear His heavenly doctrine. Not so the Pharisees, for they were hardened with the love of the world, and despised Christ. And however exceptionable the characters of people might have been formerly, if they now show any symptoms of penitence and attachment to religion, we ought to receive and encourage them. And we may naturally conclude that they had something good about them when they could relish the company of Christ. When wicked people relish the company of the people of God, there is some cause of hope of reformation about them. There were sick, it is true; but they had still greater need of a physician. And He was the Physician of souls, and though the Pharisees, believing themselves to be

in health, saw no need of Christ, poor sinners did, therefore they applied and were healed. And though there may be danger of infection by associating with wicked men, the danger ceases when they show that they are willing to confess and forsake their sins. If good men, therefore, associate with sinners, merely to bring them back to God, there is no danger in their society; but if they keep their company merely for a social turn, there is danger that evil communications may corrupt good manners. And this has often been the case. But if good men in the exercise of the duties of their calling, should fall into any company, let them only prove true to God, and they may do good to others without getting any hurt to themselves.

Verses 14, 15, 16, 17—"Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus saith unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the day will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth to an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles, else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish; but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved."

It may occasionally happen that good men join the wicked against the good cause. The disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast (Mark ii. 18), and they both join here and come to Christ, thinking they would carry a victory. Both parties plumed themselves upon the multitude of their duties and religious services. They used to fast; so did not the disciples of Christ, and it would appear they thought themselves far before them. The answer of our Lord would all at once satisfy the disciples of John, who would learn from their master that Christ was the Messiah. As such He was the bridegroom of the Church, and while the bridegroom was present it would be highly improper to fast. But the day was coming when He would be removed from them, and then they would mourn and fast.

Our Lord did not lay a great burden at once upon the shoulders of His followers. He trained them gradually, so that they would not feel the discipline. And He illustrates this by the two similies, the piece of new cloth and new bottles. The bottles in the East, as many of them are still, were made of skins. New wine, therefore, put in old bottles would destroy both. As the disciples were novices in religion, He did not wish to put too great a burden upon them at once.

The Pharisees needed not to boast of their fasting, for some of them did so often, merely to obtain a pleasant dream or to avert an ominous one. It is customary in some parts of England for young women to fast for a husband. They think by fasting they will see him in their sleep. Some people think there is merit in abstaining from flesh upon Fridays, though they eat other food. In our Church, following the doctrine and example of Scripture, we have occasional fasts. Though free from the yoke of ceremonies, we have fasting mentioned in the New Testament. Though we fast we do not pretend to impossibilities. We have no pretended fast or lent for forty days in imitation of Christ, who fasted 40 days. To abstain from flesh during that period, while people deal in other foods, is a kind of farce which no single text of Scripture can support.

Verses 18, 19; 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26—"While He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman who was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame of Him went abroad into all that land."

In these words we have two miracles recorded at once, struggling, like the twins mentioned in Genesis, which shall be first performed. A certain ruler applied to our Lord about his daughter. As he went to the house in order to cure her, a woman who laboured under a disagreeable and nauseous disease, and who was, therefore, ashamed to come into His presence, as she was legally unclean, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. She believed that the Saviour was endued with power to heal all diseases. But as we learn from St Mark, though her faith was great and praiseworthy, she seems as if she thought that a miracle could be, as it were, stolen from the Saviour. But whatever mixture may be with the faith of the people of God, at last it will

prove victorious. Our Lord accordingly praises her faith, and dismisses her with comfort and peace.

When he came into the ruler's house and saw the minstrels, and heard the noise the people made, He told them that the maid was not dead, but sleeping. As they did not understand our Lord's meaning, they laughed Him to scorn. Our Lord called the death of Lazarus and of this young woman a sleep. The death of the righteous is called a sleep in Scripture. It is but short, like the sleep of Lazarus and the ruler's daughter. As the people who were present were actuated by a spirit of murmuring and unbelief, and were, therefore, unworthy to witness the miracle, they were turned out. And then He raised her to life in presence of her father and mother and some of the followers of Jesus Himself. He took her by the hand and snatched her from the jaws of death. When her soul returned, her health and appetite returned also. Accordingly, He ordered to give her food. The evangelist, St Mark, observes that He desired to conceal the miracle. And He did this, no doubt, to avoid the suspicion of ostentation, and because a more proper opportunity would soon occur for publishing it, namely, His resurrection from the dead.

Verses 27, 28, 29, 30, 31—"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came into Him, and Jesus said unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you. And their eyes were opened: and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country."

After He had raised the ruler's daughter to life, two blind men cried after Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us." This was one of the names of the Messiah. After they had thus expressed their faith in Him, they followed Him to the house, and He asked them if they believed He could do this for them. And sometimes it is not an easy matter to believe in the good-will or in the power of Christ. They said they did, and immediately He opened their eyes according to their faith. But after He performed this miracle, He gave them a strict charge, with some degree of vehemence or anger, not to divulge the cure. He was above vainglory, and the blind men did wrong in spreading abroad the miracle at the time. He waited His Father's time for spreading abroad His glory and publishing His great works of power.

Verses 32, 33, 34—"As they went out, they brought Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake, and the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils."

Among the cures our Lord wrought He cast out a dumb devil. There are many dumb devils in our day. They are dumb in the things of God, and the devil has tied up their tongues that they cannot pray. Though these cures are seldom performed, we now and then hear of such instances. When a man is converted the dumb devil is cast out, and then the man prays in his family. But notwithstanding such a glorious cure, the Pharisees allege it was wrought by the help of the prince of devils. These wretches were guilty of the most malignant blasphemy, and their punishment is declared in the 12th chapter. They could not but know that our Lord was a good Man and full of good works, which proceeded only from the good Spirit of God.

Little, therefore, do the wicked think how awful their danger is when they talk contrary to the conviction of their own minds concerning good Christians. They must know that they are doing their duty when attending the means and promoting their own salvation. The wicked may think their tongue is their own, but they shall find hereafter how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Scripture informs us that men shall be rewarded according to their works, and what reward can they expect that persecute the people of God for doing their duty? Let the people of God, however, follow the example of their Saviour (verse 35), for we are told that notwithstanding the calumny of the foul-mouthed Pharisees that He went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. In doing His duty He did not pay attention to the flattery of His real or pretended friends, or the bitter invectives of His cruel and bitter enemies. He only studied the glory of God and the salvation of men, and nothing could divert Him from His glorious purpose till the moment He said upon the cross—"It is finished."

Verses 36, 37, 38—"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

The gathering of souls to God and to Christ is here compared to the time of harvest. Our Lord, we are told, saw a number of souls, and few or none to take care of them. This excited compassion in the tender-hearted Saviour. The people were like sheep without a shepherd. The harvest was great, and though there were many thousand souls in Palestine, between Dan and Beersheba, He saw a still greater sight in the Gentile world. And He directs His disciples to pray for the glorious event. This was what His heart was bent upon. He asked the Church from God the Father as the payment for the labour of His soul.

And when we pray for success to the Gospel we only join the Saviour in His prayer. God has promised Him the heathen for His inheritance and the utmost bounds of the earth for His possession. And however unpromising such appearance was at the time, He desired His disciples to pray for the event. We see unlikely things happen in the natural world, and unlikely things will happen in the spiritual world. In the days of St Columba, when the two Christians met, one of them took his New Testament from his pocket, read a chapter, sang a Psalm and prayed. And that happy day will yet dawn upon the Church, when the memory of the graceless wretches who now call themselves Christians, and would laugh at so much devotion, shall perish and their memory shall rot. They shall have no part or lot in this matter. But the seed of those who are now praying for such a resurrection of the good cause shall enjoy the fruits of their FATHERS' PRAYERS.

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

1. From these words we are called upon to follow the bright example of Christ.

He did His duty in every possible case and circumstance. He always had His eye upon what was duty, and followed that. He did everything that promoted the glory of God and the good of souls. When called by the Spirit of God and the leadings of providence to perform duty, however difficult, He immediately obeyed. The flattery or praise of men did not exalt Him, nor did their frowns or bad language discourage Him. Let us follow His footsteps.

Lastly—It is the duty of all Christians to pray for success for the Gospel. The salvation of sinners was the business of our Lord in the world. And this ought to be the subject

of our prayers. For where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is present in the midst of them. Our Lord admitted all people to hear His heavenly discourse. But He had private meetings with His disciples, where He explained difficulties to them and gave an ear to their several petitions. We ought to follow them.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW x. 1-27

IN the words you have heard we have an account of the call and ordination of the twelve Apostles. He had been advising His disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest, and we learn from the evangelist Luke that our Lord Jesus Christ spent a night in prayer to God previous to the ordination of the Apostles. And His prayers gave effect to the call and preaching of the Apostles, and their successors, for He will be with them to the end of the world. He endued them with ample powers to heal diseases and cast out devils, as well as to preach the Gospel. Their names are also recorded, and the name of the traitor among the rest. And this is done, among other reasons, to be a beacon to the clergy that they might pray earnestly to God to keep them from the rock upon which he split. A covetous clergyman is a bad character, and I do not think it probable that God will employ him as an instrument to convert souls. But what the sovereignty of God might do I shall not take upon me to determine. And there I must leave the matter. This thought must be a searching one to a clergyman. I believe, if we do our duty conscientiously, that some good effects will follow, though they should not happen in our day.

Our Lord did sow the good seed, and there was a great harvest of conversions in Judea before the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem. When He gave His commission to His ambassadors the first offer was to be to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Apostles were to be gradually instructed in the precious secret that the Gentiles were to form a large part of the flock of Christ.

Although our Lord is the Saviour of all the ends of the earth, His commission as a preacher of the everlasting Gospel was confined to the Holy Land. But He, now and then, gave more than obscure intimations that He intended to call the Gentiles, for He cured the Centurion's servant and the daughter of the woman of Canaan. He likewise praised the faith of both. But the time of their calling was not yet come. It

was necessary that He should suffer and die and rise again before the Apostles could bear witness of Him to the Gentiles. They could not be furnished with sufficient arguments till these events took place. To prepare them for executing this large commission, their labours for this time are confined to the narrow bounds of Palestine. And they were to inform the Jews that the Kingdom of Heaven—that is the Gospel dispensation—was at hand.

In order to procure credit to their doctrine they are empowered to work astonishing miracles. They were to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils. They received those powers freely, and freely they were to communicate them. It was a delegated power they received, and they were to use that power for the good of others. They were also required to express an unlimited trust in Divine providence (verses 9 and 10). They were not to provide gold or silver or brass in their purses; they must not have two coats or shoes, or even staves. And this conduct would prove unfeigned trust in God and disinterested benevolence toward men. And if we showed more of this spirit in ourselves we would live more happily than we generally do. Though we are not literally called to the duties required of the Apostles, the followers of Christ are to show this spirit to the end of the world. If the Lord Jesus has use for the service of any man in the Gospel, that man needs not to speak to the patron before the death of the incumbent. He says Himself that the labourer is worthy of his hire. And if we labour honestly in the vineyard, we will surely get our penny in the day. He will provide bread in this world, and a crown of glory in the next. Those who turn many to righteousness will shine as the stars for ever and ever.

Verses 11, 12, 13, 14, 15—Let us now attend to the advices our Lord gives them in the discharge of their duty as His ambassadors. When they came to any town, city or house they were to make enquiry into the character of the inhabitants. This they would soon know. When they entered a house they were to salute it. If the house or city had a relish for their doctrine or message they would make them welcome; if not, they would grudge to receive them. After saluting the house—that is, wishing it prosperity and peace—if the house was worthy, the peace of God would remain in it. But if the house was not worthy, the blessing they prayed for to the house would fall upon themselves. Thus we learn in the 49th Chapter of Isaiah that though the labours of Messiah were in vain with respect to unhappy Israel, that Himself would be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. And this happens to all faithful clergymen. Though their

hearers should remain in their wickedness and unbelief, their well-meant labours will be accepted by God. And their doctrine will raise its head years after they return to God. If they were ill-received they were desired to use a significant ceremony: they were to shake off the dust of their feet against them. Those who rejected or despised their message could not forget what they saw. And however much people may despise or ridicule the Gospel, they will find to their cost that this is a sin of the deepest dye. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven, and yet their punishment will be small in comparison with those who despise the Gospel. And yet the people of the world reckon this as only a venial sin. What infidels we are in fact. If a clergyman in a great town, after having witnessed the execution of a murderer, were to tell his hearers that the civil and honest part of his congregation would be more severely punished in the world to come than that murderer, how would his doctrine be received? Perhaps with a smile. But the doctrine may be true. Owing to the wicked depravity of his parents, the murderer might be ignorant of the Gospel. And though he died in his sins, he was not so guilty as those who were sermon-proof, who refused the Gospel, and bid defiance to religion.

Our Lord was in true earnest in the things which He spake. The punishment of the people of Sodom will be less than the punishment of those who refuse the Gospel. And it is evident that great numbers of people who are not grossly immoral do so. From this appears the malignity of unbelief. We know from Scripture that some of the most shocking characters that ever existed upon the face of the earth are now in heaven. And how did this happen? They turned from their sins, and were washed in the blood of the Lamb. Thousands of decent characters in the eyes of the world rejected the atonement, and, therefore, perished in their sins. The most inveterate diseases of the souls of men were cured, the filthiest crimes were washed, when they applied to the Physician. All are sinners, and how awful is the condition of those who refuse Him! And wherein does the malignity of unbelief consist? Answer—1, In making God a liar; 2, In rejecting the only remedy for sin.

1. It consists in giving the lie to God Himself.

Unbelievers give Him a challenge, and, therefore, they must fall before Him. Giving the lie has always been resented in every age and country, as an insult that must be punished. And God will severely punish those who refuse to believe after getting every proof laid before them that reason could ask of the truth of the Gospel.

2. And the malignity of it will further appear from this, that they reject the only remedy for sin.

Though sinners had destroyed themselves, God provided a remedy in the Gospel. If a man had a bodily disease and refused a cure that was offered him, still he might be cured by some other means. But for the diseases of the soul there is no cure in the whole creation but one, and that is the Blood of Sprinkling. Those who refuse this cure must die in their sins, and this shows the awfulness of this sin.

Verse 16—"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves : be ye, therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

The Apostles were sent forth to preach the Gospel without any defence or armour of proof. They were surrounded by enemies on every side, and, therefore, they are here enjoined by the Saviour to join the wisdom of the serpent to the simplicity and innocence of the dove in their intercourse with men. Since the earliest accounts of mankind the wisdom of the serpent is taken notice of. The best things only about the serpent are here recommended. The serpent, above all things, takes care of her head. Before the serpent drinks, it spues the poison, lest it should hurt herself. It renews her age by casting off her skin. It refuses to be charmed by the voice of the enchanter. In this manner we ought to imitate the commendable things that we may find, even in bad men. We must have also, as true Christians, the innocence of the dove. The wisdom of the serpent, if there is no more, is a poor account of a man professing Christianity. And it must be inconvenient for a Christian in this world, though his life were innocent, if he is entirely destitute of the wisdom of the serpent. But by blending both we may make our way through the thorny paths of life in a way somewhat tolerable.

Verses 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27—"But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak : for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, and the children shall rise up against the parents and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." 23—"But when they persecute you in this city flee into another,

for verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come. The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above His Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Belzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household? Fear them not, therefore, for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear that preach ye in the house-tops."

He desires them to beware of men, for they were like wolves. And a wolf will devour a sheep without any fault at all in the poor innocent animal. Our Lord, therefore, bids His followers to take care that they do not give them just cause of offence. And He tells them what they might expect from them. They were to deliver them up to the councils and scourge them in the synagogues. He informs them that they were to be brought before governors and kings for His name's sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. When the followers of Christ pleaded their cause before Kings and before Pagan governors, if they rejected the Gospel, it was at their peril. They could not but hear what would condemn them if they remained in unbelief. And it must be so to this day in regard to the hearers of the Gospel. They cannot forget before the great judgment-seat the great and tremendous truths which they heard. These truths must appear for or against them. Now, it might occur to a person that the terrifying truths which our Lord here spoke might discourage them entirely, and almost entirely sink their spirits. But let such reflect that the prospect of a battle wherein so many thousands are likely to fall will not damp the courage of good soldiers, though the General promises only temporal rewards to those who may survive. But our Lord promises a CROWN.

And we find that the crown animated them in all that they did and suffered for Christ. He does not feed them with temporal promises, but to the eye of faith He holds forth the promised reward. And in case they might fear lest they would be at a loss what to say when called upon to defend the truths of Christianity, they were here told that they need not study beforehand what they would say. He promises them a large share of the Holy Spirit to assist them. As their trials would be great and extraordinary, they would get new and extraordinary assistance. The nearest relations were to betray one another. This happened often on account of religion. But to animate them they are told that he who would persevere to the end would certainly be saved. And however furious the persecution might rage, there was to be

some respite, and they had liberty to flee from one city to another. And before they traversed the whole land of promise, the Son of Man would come.

His coming does not necessarily imply His coming to judgment. But it certainly implies some great work of power to be performed by Him. Our Lord said to the Centurion applying for his servant, "I will come and heal him." This did not imply His bodily presence to heal his servant, but His powerful spiritual presence. Our Lord may be said to come when He does glorious works of power in the Gospel, or when He punishes His enemies in the ordinary or extraordinary course of His providence. And He set up a Church for Himself in Judea, and these churches were in a flourishing condition in the days of the Apostles, and long before His coming to punish wicked Jerusalem by the sword of the Romans.

Now, lest it should surprise or even offend His disciples that they should suffer so much for doing good to the souls and bodies of men, our Lord obviates this objection. He tells them that the disciple was not above his master or the servant above his Lord. If they gave reproachful names to the Master of the house, what surprise or wonder need it excite if they ill-used the servants of the family? He guards them against fear on account of the Gospel. It was now dark and obscure, but the day would soon arrive when it would arise superior to all the power that could rise against it. It was now a secret, but it would soon come to light. It was customary in the East for a great teacher to have an interpreter. What the Master said in the interpreter's ear, he spoke aloud to all the scholars. The meaning then would be, that the Gospel would not be any longer confined within the narrow limits of Palestine. It would soon spread like lightning, and shine upon the whole Gentile world. And this came to pass a few years afterwards. Before the Apostles died it spread through a great part of Asia, Europe, and Africa. And the day is fast approaching when it will enlighten the whole habitable globe.

PRACTICAL INFERENCES OR REMARKS.

1. How precious is the Gospel.

We are all desired to pray for the success of the Gospel. The Apostles prayed for it, and we ought to follow their example. This is the reward that Christ is to have for the labour of His soul. Our Lord not only prayed for it, but we are told He spent a whole night in prayer to God. And our

Lord will be with all the faithful followers of the Apostles to the end of time.

2. The danger of refusing the Gospel.

Sodom and Gomorrah are punished with signal vengeance, but Capernaum and the cities of Galilee are threatened with worse. And we daily hear the doctrines which they refused. Poor is the pennyworth, though great is the punishment of those who reject the Saviour. Whether a man gets a large farm with Demas or the young ruler a purse of silver with Judas, or plenty of meat and drink with the rich glutton—Alas!!! What has he when he loses his soul?

May God bless His Word to us. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xv. 28-42

IN the remaining part of the chapter which we heard just now read, our Lord gives several useful doctrines and directions to His Apostles which we shall explain in order.

Verse 28.—“And fear them not which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

How contrary is this doctrine to the spirit and practice of the world. The fear of man is a most powerful principle in the human heart. When Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image in the plain of Dura, among the great multitude gathered upon that occasion none had the courage to oppose him but three Hebrew youths. In the Pagan and Popish persecutions, alas! how many yielded through the slavish fear of man! In matters of less consequence than denying the faith, what a powerful charm is in the breath of a Superior. And why? He can hurt the body and blast a man's temporal interest. In many cases men had often the power of life and death in their hands, and they have made a bad use of it by punishing the innocent and putting the body to death. Even in our own day the pride of a Superior, or what we call a Laird, removed a young man from his estate because he rebuked him for breach of the Sabbath. But our Lord contrasts the two fears, that of those who can kill the body, and of Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. And when these are put in opposition, reason will tell which is the proper choice. And if the principle of the slavish fear of man was not very powerful in our hearts, our Lord would not use the most powerful argument in the creation to counteract its influence. There is here laid before us the frown of man and the anger of God as opposites, and yet we daily find that owing to the depravity of our hearts, the fear of man will often sway our actions. We act against principle, reason and conscience. The language of the world is, “If thou let this man go, thou art not the friend of Caesar.”

Now, as it is a duty to follow Christ even to the cross, and lay down our lives for His sake if called to do so—this

teaches us to pray earnestly for His Spirit to enable us to perform such a difficult duty, for of ourselves we can do nothing. Let us look to the cloud of witnesses that surround us. Persons as weak in body and mind as ourselves have suffered for Christ, and He can enable us to do likewise when we depend upon His assistance and grace. Our timorous hearts and our unbelief may suggest to us that if matters came to a trial we might act the part of Pilate and crucify the cause of Christ. In answer to these fears it may be observed that the Apostles were afraid that they might be tempted to commit a crime their souls did abhor. It is well known that many soldiers who were terribly afraid before the battle have behaved valiantly after the engagement began. Let us do our present duty, whatever it may be, and if called to more difficult duties we shall receive additional strength and courage. According to our day, so shall our strength be. We may and often are afraid of things that will never come to pass. We should cast our care upon the Lord, and leave things to come in His own hands. Why should we be troubled if we find ourselves destitute of the courage of a general or the wisdom and talents of a Secretary of State. God is glorified if we act in proportion to our present strength.

Let us trust in the Lord, for in Him is everlasting strength. By persevering in the way of the Lord we shall become stronger and stronger. If we resist smaller temptations to sin with the strength we have at present we may hereafter be able to overcome more powerful ones, like Joseph and David. "Shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" is the language of the one; "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed," is the resolution of the other. And yet their temptations were strong and powerful. The strongest of all temptations is the fear of death. The practice of doing their duty made them strong against strong temptations to sin. God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, and His grace will be sufficient for us in all our struggles.

Verses 29, 30, 31.—The Divine providence over-rules the actions of creatures through the whole extent of creation. Not only the highest seraph in glory is the object of His regard, but the most insignificant creatures upon earth are under His care and inspection. And if His providence reaches the minutest concerns of the minutest of His works, how much more does He regard the actions and interests of His people. The very hairs of their heads are all numbered. A sportsman cannot bring down a sparrow to the ground without Divine permission. Nor can the enemies of His people be permitted to hurt or touch them unless it be for their own good and the

good of others, and for the Divine glory. Men do not count but things they reckon valuable, and His people are so precious in the sight of God that the hairs of their heads are all numbered. And if the people of God formerly had a favour for the dust of Zion, we believe that God has a regard for the bodies of His people when reduced to dust. It is precious dust, and God will raise it to life and glory.

Verses 32, 33.—“Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.”

One would think that these words would prove like a thunderbolt to those smooth, slippery Christians that are so pliant as to be of the religion of any company they happen to be among. If religion is despised or ridiculed in their presence they have not the courage or the honesty to stand up in its defence. Is not this denying Christ before men? And how awful is this threatening—He says “He will deny them before God.” He will not acknowledge them as His own before God and His holy angels.

Great and good men have felt the importance of these awful truths. That pious man, Archbishop Cranmer, burnt his fingers in the candle because he signed a paper at the desire of the Papists in the bloody reign of Queen Mary. And it cost a still greater man, the Apostle Peter, many tears because he denied Christ. Let us, then, be faithful to our religion, and hold fast our profession before men.

Verses 34, 35, 36.—The Jews and many besides them since the days of Christ have made a bad use of these words, merely because they did not understand them. Our Lord is the Prince of Peace, and to those who embrace and believe His Gospel He giveth a peace that passeth understanding. How, then, does He say in these words that He did not come to send peace on earth? Our Lord foresaw the effects the Gospel would produce in the wicked. They would oppose and persecute the followers of Christ. Those who did not believe would betray and punish their nearest relations. And thus the Gospel of peace would be the cause of disturbance, owing to the perverse, malignant wickedness of mankind. It is so to this day, for the Apostle tells us that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. The generality of professing Christians have conformed so much to the spirit of the world that the world does not persecute them. The Christian world is now as wicked in many cases as the Pagans were in the days of the Apostles. And how few are there so true to the cause of Christ as to rebuke them. The tiger, the

wild beast of persecution, may be now asleep, but the revival of Christianity would awaken him. Let a true Christian rebuke a wicked, great man or rich man for his uncleanness, his breach of Sabbath, his intemperance, and his oppression, and if he cannot hurt his temporal interest he will at least attempt to break his character; he brands him with the epithet of bigot, enthusiast, fanatic, and twenty other odious names. But the man who drinks with them and winks at their practices is a decent, honest fellow, and is, therefore, permitted to sleep in a safe skin. And it is cause of regret that even some true Christians are defective in their duty in this respect.

Verse 37.—“He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

The Divine commandment is that we should honour our parents and love and cherish our children. But it sometimes happens that parents may be wicked and unnatural, and may oppose us in things that belong to God. In such cases it must be observed that our duty to God must have the preference. Parents may desire us to commit sin. This we are not to do to please or humour any parent, friend or benefactor. A very heathen could say—“Plato is my friend, Socrates is my friend, but the greatest friend is truth.” Parents and children may interfere with our duty and prove a snare to our souls. We may love and obey them too much. Eli preferred his children to God, and Micah, by the advice of his mother, set up idolatry in his family, as we read in the Book of Judges. The children of Popish parents who have been converted to God and to a purer religion, could not be prevailed upon to desert the true faith, notwithstanding the threats and the displeasure of their parents and friends. A wicked parent may encourage and even advise his children to steal and to break the law of God. But they may lawfully refuse to obey, and by doing so they do not break the Fifth Commandment. We are to obey God rather than man. And if parents stand by their children in wickedness, take their excuse and pretend they are innocent when appearances say they are guilty, do not such parents show clearly that they love their wicked children better than their Saviour, and do they not prove themselves unworthy of the Saviour and of His love ?

Verse 38.—“And he that taketh not his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me.” Verse 39.—“He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

Self-denial is the great duty of the Christian, and by comparing this with other parts of the Scripture, our Lord

seems here to prepare His followers for suffering persecutions for the sake of the Gospel. But though this may be the principal scope of the words, they refer to the ordinary state of Christians in whatever particular case they may happen to be. We are not to murmur or rebel against God for His dispensations. They may be severe, but they are less than our iniquities deserve. Shimei cursed and gave bad language to King David, but he submitted. We may meet with ungrateful returns from men. What then? So did many good men before us. Our present state is the best for us at the time, and He will give a good account of everything delivered into His hand. Let us then give ourselves and our condition without reserve to Him. Let us wait His time. Let us surrender ourselves to Him in the way of duty, and though we should even lose our lives for His sake, we shall be gainers at last. What is a man profited should he gain the world if he loses his soul? Let is not be like the bankrupt, who said that whatever would come of the soul, he took care of the body. This is the morality of the villain, but it is a morality that is very much in vogue. We are, therefore, to follow the Saviour, and submit to the cross and to the present duty. If we resist *that* and flee from the presence of the Lord, our iniquity may find us out, and we may be punished like Jonah, or like the brethren of Joseph.

Verses 40, 41, 42.—“He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward : and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

Little do sinful mankind who hear the Gospel consider what they do when they hear the Gospel with indifference. By so doing, even though they should not go so far as to persecute or punish the preacher, they forfeit the joys and the reward of Heaven. We are informed here that such as receive the messengers of Christ receive Himself. By believing His messengers it is the same thing as if they heard the doctrine from His own mouth, and yielded to Him the obedience of faith. By believing we receive the gift of eternal life. And even by receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet or a righteous man as such we receive a share of the rewards of such good men. Nay, even a cup of cold water given to one of the poor followers of Christ as such will be sure to receive a suitable reward. Cold water, though very plentiful in our cold climate, is not so in Eastern or Southern countries. There

it is a luxury, and we better understand the force of the expression if we happen to travel in extreme sultry weather. What a comfort, what a refreshment is the cold stream ! Water is bought and sold in the East to this day. Moses offered to pay to the King of Edom money for the water the army of Israel would drink in passing through his country, and this was cruelly refused him. The Moabites and Ammonites are blamed because they came not with bread and water to the children. The plain meaning is that the least favour done to one of the followers of Christ as such will be amply rewarded. And this sometimes happens, even in this same world as well as in the next.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xiii. 1-23

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was the great Teacher sent from God who spake as never man spake. He is the great Prophet of the Church, who hath revealed to us the great doctrines of Grace and the mysteries of our salvation. As He was in the bosom of the Father, and is His Interpreter and Counsellor, He knew the whole will of God respecting His Church and people. It is said that though a Son (as He was a man), and did not know letters, His soul was furnished with more learning and knowledge than the children of men. And we must believe that this was the case by virtue of His union with the Divine nature. Grace was poured into His lips, and He was anointed with the oil of joy above His fellows. Though this was eminently true of Him, it does not appear from Scripture that He employed the power of a gesture or the charms and beauties of fine composition in the heavenly discourses He preached. He adapted His doctrines to the meanest and rudest capacities. He taught by apt similitudes or parables, so that they could scarcely forget His doctrines. We learn from Scripture that people understood His parables, and if the doctrines He taught were hid from any it was owing to their own wickedness and unbelief. We then ought to say to every man—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I shall, therefore, by Divine assistance, endeavour to explain to you the portion of Scripture which was read to you with as much regard to perspicuity as possible, and conclude with some practical inferences by way of improvement.

Verses 1 and 2—"The same day," etc.—Our Lord was an indefatigable preacher—He never wearied of doing good. You heard the doctrine He taught in the former chapter, and now you hear that upon the same day He went out of the house and sat by the sea-side, and as great multitudes were gathered together, He taught them again. It was His meat and drink to do the will of God, and bring immortal souls to a sense of their duty. He did not excuse Himself from His delightful employment by what he had done in the former part of the

day. Like the sun that enlightens every part of the earth, He went about through all Palestine and executed the commission His Father gave Him.

He went about constantly doing good, enlightening dark souls by His heavenly doctrines, and confirming His commission by the most astonishing and most salutary miracles. As all Christians should follow His holy example, so ministers of the Gospel are called upon in a particular manner to proclaim His Name, and follow Him in the assiduity with which He prosecuted the work of the ministry.

The Apostles were so struck with a sense of the importance of their work that they appointed others to superintend the temporal concerns of the Church, that they might devote all their time to prayer and the work of God. Are ministers of our day better than the Apostles, and can they do what the Apostles would not and should not do? A minister is the soldier of Christ, and he cannot entangle himself in the affairs of the world—He cannot serve two masters. The Apostle Paul says—“Who is sufficient for these things?” Does not the conduct of a minister who meddles in the world tell us that he is more than sufficient for these things—that he is sufficient for the world also? Can we do what the Apostle could not venture to do? I leave you to answer this question. The Saviour was a lover of souls, and we ought to love them above all other concerns.

Verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.—As I mean to explain the parable more particularly when I come to the 19th verse, I shall from these words observe the following things:—First—The propriety and decorum of our Saviour’s parables. Secondly—Why He taught the people by parables.

First—The propriety and decorum of our Saviour’s parables. In a parable the particular scope or intention of the Person that propounds it is what we are to pay attention to. We are not to apply every particular part of a parable, for this will not hold always in the parables of the Gospel. The principal thing is what we are to pay attention to. The parable plainly points out to us the reception the Gospel would meet with. There are many kinds of heavens, and this is the scope of the parable. When we compare the parables of the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Sower, we find that their principal and only scope is to show that mankind in general would not receive or believe the Gospel when it was propounded to them. It does not signify, as some would have it, the proportion the good bear to the bad—if this was the case one parable would contradict the other. It signifies

only that some were good and some bad. When our Saviour in plain terms informs us that many are called and few chosen, this throws sufficient light upon the doctrine of the parables.

Second—Why He taught the people by parables. He did this, in the first place, because allegory or parable is a plain, familiar way adapted to all capacities and what every person can understand. If He made use of abstract reasoning, or if He employed the finest composition, very few could follow Him. The learned only would understand Him, but the bulk of His hearers would go home without edification. Again, He employed this method because it was the best calculated to strike the attention and be retained in the memory. Children would remember similes borrowed from the works of creation, and they are not below the attention of men of the most exalted genius. Lastly, He made use of parables because the doctrine couched in them is, in general, better received than what is given in plain language. The sinner is reproved, and, like the royal Penitent, is made to understand Himself.

Verse 9.—“He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” It is the duty of all that hear the Gospel to take heed what they hear, for they cannot hear it with indifference but at their everlasting peril. This word is the savour of death or of life to all that hear. Scripture speaks of people uncircumcised in heart and in ear. “To whom shall I speak?” says the Prophet Jeremiah, “and give warning that they may hear.” “Behold their ear is uncircumcised that they cannot hearken.” And in another place he complains that the house of Israel were uncircumcised in the heart. God promises to circumcise the heart of His people, and that He will remove the stony heart and give a heart of flesh. We cannot hear with profit to ourselves till this is the case. Is our Saviour’s advice, therefore, in vain, or will the stony heart of the uncircumcised ear excuse people? It will not. This aggravates their condemnation. When people hear the Word of God there are some things in their power to do, and if they do them not they are inexcusable, and their punishment will be just.

First, they can examine whether what they hear be the Word of God. And they may know this by the purity of the doctrine, the prophecies, and the miracles that support it. They may know by the hold it takes of their conscience, so that they humble themselves at the thought of the judgment to come. Though the will revolts, conscience says, “Yes.” The word of God shines by its own light and brings such conviction as will render sinners inexcusable. It must be so, for they will be judged by the word.

2. Again, it is in their power to hear with attention and impartiality. They may purge their minds from prejudice and forsake many of the sins that blind their minds and harden their hearts. Why does not the Word profit them? They refuse to give it admittance and make truth a prisoner of unrighteousness. They do not give the Word an impartial hearing, for if they did it would condemn their practices and terrify their souls. They do not wish to know that such and such truths are in the Word. They are willingly ignorant, and as to the knowledge they have they rebel against the light. Now, they could help and avoid all this.

3. They have it in their power to pray to God for His sanctifying and enlightening influences to guide them in the right path, and make them believe and obey the Gospel. And when people honestly ask this, reason as well as Scripture will say, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." When people, then, come to hear the Word of God, is this their uniform practice? Do they hear with reverence, examine with impartiality, and pray with sincerity? "He that hath ears to hear," let him do this, and the Word will profit his soul.

Verse 10.—"And His disciples came and said to Him, Wherefore speakest thou to them in parables?"

From these words we may see the character of those who are truly willing to learn. His disciples heard many things which they clearly did not understand. They took the first opportunity of being better informed, and we also find that our Lord was ready to explain His doctrines to any that were of a teachable disposition and were willing to learn. Ignorance could be no excuse to those who could have heard Christ, and it can surely be no excuse to us. And our Saviour informs us of this in the following verses:—

Verses 11, 12.—"To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, to them it is not given," etc.

Our Lord answers their question by recurring to the free and unmerited grace of God to His disciples, and as for the rest, He lays the blame to the account of their own wickedness and unbelief. "To you it is given." From these words we see that some are distinguished by free grace. If any are saved they are saved by grace, and to those who improve their grace more shall be given, and they shall increase abundantly. The great doctrines of the Gospel are mysteries, and none can know them till God reveal them to their souls by His Spirit. "The natural man knoweth not the things of God," and though the word strikes the ears of the body, the mind is blind and the heart hard. By nature we are enemies to God, and if

people nurse and cherish this, natural enmity will grow. And our Lord shows us the danger of this state in the following verses :—

Verses 13, 14, 15.—“Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they do not see.”

Parables strike the attention and excite curiosity. If we had never heard any of the parables of the Gospel till this day they would make a great impression on our minds. Now, our Saviour's parables are so striking that they carry light and conviction to the mind. Some of them might be dark and at first not easily understood by ignorant people, but such as were of a teachable disposition might easily have access to get them explained. Parable or allegory were frequent in the writings of the Eastern authors, and if persons carped at their literal meaning, they betrayed either ignorance or wickedness or both. He alludes to practices and customs to which they were not strangers, and, therefore, could not mistake His meaning. If they were ignorant, therefore, they were wilfully ignorant, for they shut their eyes upon the truth. Our Saviour, therefore, uses parables as the fittest method of teaching for all ranks of His hearers. Such as were willing to learn could not forget a beautiful and significant parable. A principle of curiosity and a principle of conscience would excite them to get the doctrine explained to them. Such as hardened themselves in their sins must have offered violence to their own consciences and to all the feelings of their hearts if they did not search after the meaning. If they remained ignorant, they must have done so from mere malignity of heart. In them, therefore, and in all such is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah—“Hearing, ye shall hear, and seeing, ye shall see and not perceive—for the heart of this people is waxed gross; their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed—lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should be converted and I should heal them.” The doctrine was calculated to heal them. If people are not brought to God by the Gospel, the cause is obvious—they have eyes but do not see : they have ears but do not hear, and while they remain such, they can never be healed or pardoned. The Gospel, and the Author of the Gospel, are the most precious guests that ever visited our benighted world. If we refuse to give the Gospel access to our hearts, great must be our condemnation. Let us not provoke God by such wicked conduct. It is said in Scripture that Pharaoh hardened his heart, and afterwards it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He left him to the hardness and malignity of his own heart. It would appear that many of the Jews in our Saviour's

time were in this very state. This is an awful state, and this is the state in which people may fare by despising the Gospel. It is the way in which God punishes them, and it is the most awful of all punishments. Though this is a most dangerous state, almighty grace can cure the malignant disease. And that it has been cured may appear from the following reasons :

First—Our Lord informs us that all manner of sin shall be forgiven to men, and one of His Apostles informs us that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. Our Lord does not accuse them of the unpardoned sin.

Secondly—People would not have committed such a great sin as the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory unless they had been hardened by other sins and brought to a state of insensibility, and it is clear from Scripture that many of those sinners were washed and pardoned.

Lastly—Manasseh, to name no more, was hardened in sin, and by all appearance was given up to a reprobate sense. Otherwise how could he have been guilty of actions so black, so contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to humanity. His actions were even blacker than the actions of Pharaoh, whom God Himself is said to have hardened. Now, we know that black actions proceed from a black and wicked heart, and yet Manasseh was pardoned and saved.

If our hearts are hardened let us labour to get them softened. Let us apply to the Saviour for His blood and Spirit. We have heard of the danger of this awful state of mind, and though Manasseh was brought out of this state, you see that Pharaoh was left to perish in his sins. And if you harden yourselves against the doctrines you hear—if you perish it shall be your own fault. By opposing a doctrine of Scripture you are like a wave of the sea dashing itself against the Rock. People may despise and even laugh at the doctrines of the Gospel, but they shall think differently of them when the rattle is in their throat and their souls are hovering upon the borders of an unseen world. If people come to hear the Word with a view to getting some word to carp at or to laugh at, let them laugh at the following Scripture:—"Ye vipers, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" If people have a turn to joke, they should at least show more common-sense than to laugh at things that are verily connected with everlasting happiness or misery. Let them not crucify Christ afresh.

Verses 16, 17.—"But blessed are your eyes," etc.

After showing the awful state and danger in which the Jews lay by their obstinacy and unbelief, He turns His doctrine to such of His hearers as were of a teachable disposi-

tion and heard the truth with impartiality and sincerity. "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear," and to show of what importance the truths of the Gospel were, He informs them that many prophets and righteous persons desired to see and hear what they saw and heard. Our Saviour pronounces them happy, not merely because they heard them with the ears of their bodies, but because they embraced them with a true and lively faith. The greatest men under the Patriarchal and Jewish economies rejoiced at the prospect of Gospel days. The Word of God was then confined to a small spot of the earth, and the heavenly doctrines were couched under a load of ceremonies and dark parables. They rejoiced at the thought that Messiah was to reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. And if we likewise make a good use of the Gospel our happiness is unspeakable. We have privileges which were not granted to the greatest and most respectable characters under the Old Testament.

It was not their worldly prosperity or honour that made these great men to rejoice, but a view of the day of Christ which we enjoy. Let us beg of God to give us grace to improve our great and glorious privileges.

Verses 18, 19.—"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone heareth the word of the Kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side."

We may easily know the literal meaning of the simile—the birds of the air devoured the seed that fell by the way-side, and the wicked one taketh away the Word from persons that do not understand the value and import of what they hear. The high road is hard by the feet of passengers, so that the Word could not get hold of the earth, and though the Word of God may drop for a moment into the heart that is rendered callous by the love of the world, or the indulgence of some sinful passion, the enemy of their souls catcheth it away immediately. The Word finds no room in a heart rendered hard by sin. And if some slight impression should occasionally be made upon the surface of the heart, it does not go deep enough. Satan and his emissaries soon wear off the impression, and when the man goes among his sinful companions he soon drowns his convictions in the bowl, or suffocate them by the commission of some new sin. Or perhaps the miserable sinner may be so far forsaken by God as that he may fall into the company of false teachers who have a living for preaching the Gospel, and laugh secretly at the most serious truths contained therein.

These are the most dangerous companions for a man's soul. They are the black birds of hell, who devour the precious seed. And when people delight not in the truth God may give them up to strong delusions to believe a lie. It is no wonder though you should see these false teachers the bosom companions of those who are delivered up by God to a reprobate sense and the plague of a hard heart. They mutually blind and harden each other, and when the blind lead the blind both fall into the ditch.

The greatest curse that can befall any man in this world is to prefer falsehood to truth, and this never happens till the heart becomes as hard as the high-road. In that case any temptation that passes by may carry off the Word from him. And you may easily see that if his heart is not plowed by the law of God, he must die without grace and have a distressed eternity.

Verses 20, 21.—“And that which was sown in stony places.”

In these words we have a lively picture of many professors. At first they seem to glow with affection. They hear the Word with joy, and continue for a while. Their hearts are not so hard by the practice of sin as those who are compared to the high-road; they have some kind of regard for it : they hear it, and seem to have a relish for what they hear. But, alas ! they have no root, for the first trouble or persecution that arises on account of the Word gives them offence. And this supposes that trouble of some kind will rise, for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. They cannot avoid it, for there is enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Now, as those persons have no root in themselves, they cannot bear persecution—they fall away and decline. They are offended—they do not relish a religion that exposes them to contempt or ridicule. And as they get no spiritual view of the beauty of religion, or experience in a saving manner the joys that flow from the one thing needful, they abandon what they do not think worth the keeping. If great people or rich people countenance religion they can then put on the outward garb of holiness, but if the common people hear Christ gladly they ask—“Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him ?” When rich or learned people laugh at religion they give it up. But if all the rich or learned men in a kingdom would say that health of body or the light of the sun are not good, no man in his senses would believe them, or part with his health or eyes to please them, and yet people often part with their religion, which is the health and light of the soul, for fear they should

be the laughing-stocks of fools. This, however, is a proof that they have no root in themselves, for if religion is the one thing needful they should part with everything to retain it. How poor and contemptible is the character that sells his religion for a smile. And yet such characters are common, but their state is awful and dangerous.

Verse 22.—“He that received the seed among thorns,” etc.

From these words we see the danger of covetousness, worldly ease, and overmuch attachment to the things of this life. St Mark mentions likewise the lusts of other things. Now, the lusts of the flesh, as well as covetousness and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word and render it unfruitful. If a field is full of thorns, and they are allowed to grow, they prevent the seed from coming to any perfection. Our Saviour informs us that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And He explains to us who are the rich men He means—even those who trust in riches. The love of riches is a deceitful and a bewitching passion. It often alters his sentiments and manner of life. The desire of these is never satisfied. Riches blind the eyes and harden the heart. He sees that riches procure for him all the pleasures and luxuries of life. He observes that honour and respect are attached to riches, and, therefore, pursues them with all the bent of his soul. Now, it is impossible that the grace of God can dwell in a heart where any grovelling lust or passion bears sway. The love of the world and the love of God cannot dwell in one heart.

Verse 23.—“But he that received seed in the good ground,” etc.

Here we are taught the effect the Word has upon those whose hearts are made good ground by the grace and Spirit of God. They receive the Word in a good and honest heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. They yield some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. We need not be surprised at the extraordinary fruitfulness of Palestine and other warm climates when we sometimes experience surprising fruitfulness in our own country upon some occasions. Now, the Word has a similar effect upon some good men. The Apostles and primitive Christians were wonderfully fruitful. They yielded an hundredfold. And blessed be God in all ages of the Church, there have been instances of people bearing some sixty and some thirtyfold. They have been remarkable for their fruits of faith and labours of love. Some spots of God’s vineyard have been very fruitful. They have flourished like Sharon and Carmel. They have been like a watered garden

and their fruit like Lebanon. If it be a pleasant sight in the eyes of men to see fields in the highest state of cultivation, waving with corn and repaying the husbandman's labour and attention, how inexpressibly pleasant is His garden to the Saviour wherein grow all manner of pleasant fruits. The trees of righteousness bear fruit in old age.

INFERENCES—IMPROVEMENTS.

1. How awful is this doctrine to careless and indifferent hearers. Two sorts of people are in great danger—those who neglect and despise the means of grace—and those who enjoy the benefit of them and live in sin. If people come to hear with a malignant intention, they are only sealing their own condemnation. Their disease must indeed be very virulent when they convert the food of their souls into the most deadly poison. Take heed, then, how you hear, and beware lest you provoke God to give you up to a reprobate sense and hard heart upon whom all means will be lost.

2. From these words we see the different effects the Word of God has upon different hearers. And should not this effectually provoke us earnestly and importunately to cry to heaven for His enlightening and sanctifying influences upon our souls? We cannot hear with profit if we do not believe, and we cannot believe while the heart is hard. And as God has promised to give the new heart, let us plead His promise, for He has not excluded us. Let us look to His power and promise. He can, for He created heaven and earth, and nothing is too hard for Him. He will, for He sent His Son to the world, and this is His work—to destroy the work of the devil and give repentance.

3. Some poor soul will ask—"What if I be in this sad condition?—'having eyes, ye see not.'" Answer—Read over the awful state of the Jews in the Saviour's time. Though this is a most dangerous state, Almighty grace can cure the malignant disease. And that it has been cured may appear from the reasons annexed to verses 13, 14, and 15.

May God bless His own Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xiii. 24.43

IN this parable our Lord gives us a description of the state of the visible Church, and the different states that await good and bad men in the world to come. I have already informed you of the propriety of instruction by parable or allegory. Parables are easily remembered, and if people despise or neglect the doctrines couched under them, they do so to their own unspeakable hurt and misery. I shall, by Divine assistance, endeavour to explain this portion of Scripture to you, and conclude by giving some sound, practical inferences in the way of improvement.

Verse 24.—“And this parable put He forth to them,” etc.

Our Lord Himself, in the explanation of the parable, informs us who it was that sowed the good seed in the field. It is the Lord Jesus Himself. The Gospel, and those who are influenced by the Gospel, are the good seed, and this seed is sown in the world. This is the great field, and though the greatest part of it is still a wilderness, the time is coming when it shall be brought under cultivation, for God promised the heathen to His Son for His inheritance. A great part of it that was once cultivated is now wild, being destroyed by the boar from the forest and the wild beasts of the field. Places which were once enlightened with the Gospel of Christ are now under the power of Mahommetan delusion. But the parable has respect in particular to those parts of the field which are cultivated and where the good seed is sown. The Gospel is the good seed, and those who embrace it are the children of God and the seed that serve him on earth. When they are born to God by the Gospel they are a spiritual seed, and this seed is sown here and there in the earth; and sometimes a handful of the precious seed is sown upon the top of the mountains and the fruit of it becomes like Lebanon.

Verse 25.—“But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat and departed.”

When the Gospel was first preached there was no impure mixture with the precious Word of God. The Apostles did not handle the Word deceitfully, or lay any other foundation

than Jesus Christ as the Head Cornerstone. And for some short time none durst join the society of Christians but true and genuine believers. The rest were afraid, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. But in a short time things took another turn. Even in the times of the Apostles, though they could discern spirits and could distinguish between the true and the false, hypocrites and false teachers crept into the visible Church, and much more so in the times of their immediate successors. The parable observes that it was while men slept that the enemy came and sowed the tares. Charity thinketh no evil, and as the primitive teachers and Christians were men of upright hearts and sincere intentions, they believed that others were actuated with the same sentiments as they were themselves when they professed Christianity. In the following ages real spiritual sleep seized pastors and their flocks, and this made them an easy prey to seducing spirits. They were not so sharp-sighted as the Apostle, who observed a spirit of ambition entering the Church in his own day, which he foresaw would one day overspread the Church. By tares, then, we may understand false teachers and false profession. Learned men observe that tares are very like the wheat, and hypocrites pretend to be like Christians. They come to church, attend the worship, and partake of the sacraments. But they are destitute of true faith and the love of God. They live in the practice of some sin which, like the worm at the root of Jonah's gourd, eats out religion from their souls.

Verse 26.—“And when the blade sprang up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.”

In the Book of Job we are informed that when the children of God met to worship, that Satan appeared among them, and, we may believe, not with a good intention. And it has been the fate of the Church to have bad men and hypocrites mixed with true believers. However, though we cannot always judge of hypocrites, it appears from the parable that they can be known in many cases even before the harvest. It is expressly said that the tares appeared also. False doctrines and false professors may be known, the one by their tendency and the other by their fruits. False doctrines may have a fine outward appearance and the semblance of worth and substance. As the tares are like the wheat, they may appear like the wheat; also, like the food of life, till they are handled and felt. For instance, justification by works has the appearance of promising virtue and holiness; but this they can never promote unless they proceed from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Doctrines that recommend our own good works and the merits of Christ also as the procuring cause of our salvation have a strong appearance at a distance. But

when we handle them we find that, in fact, they make Christ of none effect to us. If we are justified by faith in Christ, we are justified antecedently to any good work or qualifications of our own, for He justifies the ungodly. As such we must receive Christ, and if we do not see our misery and lost, undone state, we cannot and will not apply to Christ for justification. A first-rate saint observes that all our righteousness is but filthy rags. And, it may be asked, what kind of justification will filthy rags procure for us? If it be said that we are only properly justified when we sew together by our own endeavours our own filthy rags to the bright robes of our Redeemer's righteousness, and that this is what constitutes our justifying righteousness, the saints in light say, "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us." And if we have grace to perform any good work, who procured us this grace? We cannot call it our own—it is the gift of God through Christ. And these specious doctrines that have the appearance of truth but in reality are false and hollow, produce but hollow and empty Christians, like tares. The tares, however like in appearance they may be to the wheat, are empty of substance. False Christians are void of piety, and entertain principles and produce practices contrary to holiness. And as false doctrines are known by their tendency, false professors are known by their fruits. Our Saviour mentions this as the only criterion. "By their fruits shall ye know them," says He. That tares may be distinguished from the wheat and false professors from the true is clear from the next verses.

Verses 27, 28.—"And the servants came and said," etc.

They are surprised at the growth of the tares, knowing that it was good seed that was sown in the field, and accordingly ask permission to pluck up the tares.

May not this language represent the spirit of the zealous servants of God, the faithful ministers of the Gospel? They are surprised and grieved at the small success of the Gospel and the quick growth of pestilent opinions and wicked practices among professing Christians. They wish to reform the Church, and their honest zeal hath sometimes carried them too far. They wish to pluck up the tares. Even the Apostles James and John would call down fire from heaven, and Peter draws the sword in his Master's cause. They have shown an example in this which has been but too much followed in the Church. Good men have often gone too far in endeavouring to pluck up the tares and to reform the Church. They have employed carnal weapons in the spiritual warfare. And as the best of them are but men at the best, there is a danger in allowing them pluck up the tares. And this is clear from

Verse 29, 30.—“But He said to them, Nay, lest while ye gather the tares ye root up the wheat also. Let both grow together till the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers—Go, then, gather first the tares in bundles to burn them, and gather together the wheat into My barn.”

The master of the field does not give permission to gather the tares before harvest, lest the wheat should be plucked up also. And does not the history of the Church throw light upon this truth? Have not even saints persecuted saints, thinking them to be sinners? Did not one Christian take up the sword against another? If a committee of the most godly and learned clergymen and Christians in the kingdom were armed with secular and spiritual power to reform the Church, after the most diligent scrutiny, what would be the consequences? The consequences would be that, in many cases, they would spare the smooth, polished, specious, well-spoken hypocrite, and in some instances would break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. Men have not the spiritual skill and address of our Saviour to reject such characters as the amiable young ruler, and receive the Samaritan and the thief. And does the doctrine of the parable forbid the discipline of the Church? It does not. It only supposes that, notwithstanding the strictest attention to discipline, there will be tares among the wheat, and that it will be best to permit this to happen in many cases, and that spiritual rulers should ask spiritual wisdom to direct them in their duty. What we cannot cure we must endure. Both must grow together till the harvest, and then the tares will be gathered in bundles for the fire. They are gathered together in bundles, and their punishment will be answerable to their sin. They have often gathered in companies to oppose the interest of Christ and the Gospel. People that have jarring interests in other respects can unite in opposing the Gospel. Herod and Pontius Pilate, though enemies before, became friends when Christ was to suffer. And in Church politics, when His cause is to suffer, how often has this cemented the friendship of the wicked? The tares, however, shall be gathered in bundles and burnt. But the wheat shall be gathered into the barn. All God's jewels shall be brought into one place, and, O, how bright shall their united light shine! What a beautiful group! What a bright company! They shine like the stars for ever and ever; they even shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.

I reserve what I have further to say upon this parable till the inferences, and proceed to speak a little about the other two parables—the grain of mustard seed and the leaven.

Verses 31, 32—"Another parable," etc.

In these words we see the wonderful success of the Gospel from small and unpromising beginnings.

Mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds that is sown in the earth, but in warm climates it arrives at a great and wonderful growth. The fowls of the air lodge in the branches, and it provides a shelter to them. When the Gospel made its first appearance it was despised and rejected of men, like its Divine Author. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. In a short time, however, it became a great tree, like to that which King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. The Gospel soon spread. The great Apostle of the Gentiles preached the joyful tidings all the way from Jerusalem to Illyricum. He spread the news through a great part of Europe and Asia. It would appear that the Ethiopian eunuch, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, carried the Gospel to Africa, and we learn from Church history that churches were planted in every quarter of the globe, even in countries that were not subdued by the Roman armies. And this happened in the first and second centuries, long before Christianity was the religion of the State. And when God shall give command it shall spread still further, and be the religion of all the world. And this appears from the next verse.

Verse 33.—"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven," etc.

It is the property of leaven that, as the Apostle expresses it, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. It is said in the parable that a woman hid the leaven in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. By three measures, divines understand three-quarters of the globe—Europe, Asia and Africa—the three-quarters of the then known world. Now, the truth is that the Gospel leaven is to leaven the whole lump. The whole earth is to be converted to the faith of Christ. And this shall happen not by power or might, but by the Gospel itself. The State cannot make Christians; the sword cannot convert men to God. The Church once made crusades, or what they called holy wars, to recover the Holy Land from the hands of infidels. As this was the work of men, it came to nought, and infidels still possess the land of Canaan. But when God gives the Word—the Gospel which now lies hid will exert its natural energy, and subdue all nations to the obedience of Christ.

Verses 34, 35.—"All these things spake Jesus," etc.

God promised His people that He was to raise up a great prophet among them, who was to declare His will to them. And a part of His doctrine was to be given in parables, as we

learn from the Psalmist. All the ancient prophecies centre in Christ, and it was necessary that the very minutest of them should be exactly fulfilled. On this very account it was necessary that He should ride upon an ass's colt, and that His very clothes should be divided among the Roman soldiers. Our Saviour gave His doctrine in dark parables and revealed heavenly truths that were hid from the beginning of the world. Was not the doctrine of the ancient Patriarchs and the whole Jewish religion a dark parable till our Saviour explained it by His Gospel? The Gospel revealed what was hid for ages and generations.

Verse 36.—“Then put Jesus the multitude away, and went into the house; and His disciples came unto Him, saying, ‘Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.’ ”

Our Lord, like a wise and compassionate Physician, applies His medicines according to the spiritual state of His patients. The multitude He taught by parables, which though they could not fully understand, they could well remember. Now, as medicines do not always work an instantaneous cure till some time after they are taken, the doctrines of our Saviour did not produce their full effect till afterwards. In some few, such as His disciples and immediate followers, they produced conviction all at once. And these had the benefit of His heavenly conversation and familiar discourses. What they could not understand of His public doctrine was explained to them in private, as we learn from this parable. The multitude, however, who were benefitted by His instructions, but in part, remembered the doctrines they heard. After His resurrection from the dead, the seed that was sown in their hearts being quickened by Divine influences, began to show itself by their conversion to the faith. In a short time they saw and understood the meaning of His parables. They saw the parable of the sower and the tares of the field exemplified in their countrymen the Jews and the conversion of the Gentiles. The mustard seed and the leaven they understood when the Gospel began to spread. We see in the words of the text the disciples asked Him to explain the tares of the field. The few that followed Him were prepared for what was to follow by His private instructions. There was a necessity for our Lord's teaching by parables and explaining them privately during His own ministry. If He had plainly explained His doctrine all at once He would have offended His friends as well as His enemies. And this we learn from the rebuke which Peter gave Him when He spoke about His sufferings.

Verses 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.—From the doctrine we heard and the explanation our Saviour gives of the parable, the

following remarks are offered as worthy of your attention and care. First, our Lord taught by parable, and there was a necessity for this method of instruction. The Jews were taught to believe from the writings of Moses and the Prophets that the Messiah was to come into the world. From the description given of Him in Scripture they justly concluded He would be a great Personage—but they falsely supposed that He would set up a great earthly kingdom, not considering that He must suffer before He was to reign. The prejudice in favour of an earthly King was so strong that the notion must be gradually opposed and the true doctrine offered by parable and allegory. And next to the power of God, nothing but the sufferings of Christ, of which they were eye-witnesses, could persuade His most faithful followers of the nature of His Kingdom.

Secondly, there is a Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, but all that profess to be members of it are not in the interests of their Prince and King.

The language of the hearts and practice of many is—We will not have this man to reign over us.

The tares, though like in appearance, in substance, however, are unlike to the wheat. Though false professors agree in some opinions and practices with good Christians, they differ with them in the main points. The Jews would submit to Christ if He came as a great King and earthly conqueror. They would own Him to be the Messiah if He bestowed upon them riches and pleasures and power. And if Jesus Christ granted liberty to His followers to pursue their favourite passions, that they might live as they pleased, and that He promised earthly pleasures in a heavenly world, the multitude would follow Him. Devils and infidels would commence to believe it. We should hear no more complaints of the Gospel. But such a Messiah and such a kingdom would be unworthy of God. If God erect a kingdom upon earth it must be pure and spiritual and heavenly. Now, whatever they may profess, the bulk of mankind will not submit to such a kingdom. They may have several reasons for professing to be members of His Kingdom, but they hate His Kingdom in their hearts. His Kingdom never had greater enemies than those who professed to be its true and only subjects. That all professors are not of this Kingdom, but tares among the wheat, is clear from the following reasons :—

1. Christ's subjects are a willing people, made so in a day of power. Can those, then, who have no will to His work and favour, be called a willing people? And much less can those be so called who ridicule and hate every appearance of seriousness.

2. His subjects are a free people. They are not the slaves of their own passions—they are kings and priests, for they rule over their sins. Now, sinners cannot be members of His Kingdom.

3. His subjects are zealous of good works. Their measure of grace at first may be small, like the grain of mustard seed, and they may be obscure in the world, like leaven hid in meal; but they have a catholic spirit, and wish to disseminate the Gospel. Their profession is not merely in word but in power. And though they are in the world like wheat among the tares, they do not mix with the world, but oppose its corruptions, and keep from its bad example and practices.

Lastly, from the different lot of bad and good men in the life to come we may learn the important lesson of fleeing from the wrath to come and avoiding the place of torment. With what care ought we to avoid sin and prepare ourselves for that Kingdom where the righteous shall shine like the sun. And should it not quicken our diligence to gain souls to Christ when Scripture informs us that they who do so shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. What bright promises! What scenes of happiness in the world to come! Behold the righteous, how they shine. Would you wish to be with them? Follow their faith and patience. The world takes no notice of you now: they must look at you when you shall shine like the sun and stars. Endeavour, then, to shine here. "Who-soever hath ears to hear let him hear." AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xiii. 44-58

OUR Lord still continues the parabolical method of instruction as the best adapted to the bulk of His hearers. Having already showed the beauty and propriety of this method of teaching, I proceed to the illustration of His other parables, and the reception He met with in His own country, and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verse 44.—“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.”

As the bulk of mankind place their happiness in riches, Scripture speaks of unsearchable riches and treasures to be found in Christ. The people of the world seem to think that all kind of happiness is to be found in riches. When a man finds a treasure hid in a field he conceals what he got, and as he believes there is a great deal more, if the field was his own he should have a right to the treasure. Accordingly, he sells his all and buys the field for the sake of the treasure. The treasure, he supposes, can make him rich, and can procure him all the delights of the children of men.

Happiness is the great object of every rational being. And whatever species of happiness he pursues, he would forego everything to obtain that. If a man sees his happiness in the enjoyment of anything, he surmounts all difficulties to obtain that thing. The creature is seeking happiness in this and the other vanity. At last he comes to the field of the Gospel. He is advised to dig there, and that he shall find a treasure. He does so, and the treasure satisfies him. He was in quest of happiness, and here he finds what fills all the desires of his soul. And as the worldly man with joy will hide the treasure that he may engross it all to himself, in like manner he hides the Word of God in his heart, and receives it now as his treasure. He sells all that he has; he foregoes every treasure that would stand in competition with the Gospel. And this clearly points out the superlative love and esteem we ought to have for the truth. We are desired in Scripture to buy the

truth, and to buy milk and wine. Christ is in our offer, and we ought to prefer Him to our chiefest joy. He is a treasure hid in the field of the Gospel, and we are to sell everything to procure the treasure. Have we other treasures, and do we seek our happiness in other enjoyments? We are to remember that they who are Christ's crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. We are likewise to remember that the treasure is hid in the field. We are therefore to dig for it. This shows us our duty. We are certainly to struggle to come to Christ—we must strive to enter into the strait gate, and do our diligence to be found in Him at last without spot or wrinkle.

Verses 45, 46.—“The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

We all know the value which mankind put upon precious stones, pearls, and jewels of every kind. But as mankind put a value upon them, the trade has become interesting and profitable. Now, a person dealing in this branch of commerce might meet with one pearl, the value of which is so great that he would give all the riches he had in order to procure it. He knows it is a valuable acquisition, and that this alone will make his fortune. And Christ is the Pearl of great price, and, therefore, more valuable than every other pearl, than every species of happiness in which people seek happiness and satisfaction to themselves. Christ is the Pearl of great price because all fullness is in Him alone. Why are people in quest of pleasure, of riches and of honour, but because they think they confer happiness. Now, all happiness is to be found in Him alone. We can suppose a case that may occasionally happen. A rich man might travel in disguise in a foreign country. He may have papers and notes to the value of many thousands about him and but an inconsiderable quantity of small money about him. As he passes for a poor man in a strange country, he may pass some part of his time with apparent inconveniency, but he is happy, notwithstanding, for he knows himself to be a man of fortune, and he carries a great share of riches about with him. He may live happily, though his travelling in disguise and the want of small money may occasion inconvenience. If a man has the pearl of great price he is inconceivably happy, and he sees his own happiness. As he travels in disguise in this world he may want some things, but this does not affect his happiness; he knows he is rich, and will be happy when he comes to his own country. Let us secure this Pearl.

Verses 47, 48, 49, 50.—In this parable we find a description of the visible Church and the different states of good and

bad men at the consummation of all things. In the net there are good and bad fishes, and, notwithstanding the care and vigilance of the ministers of the Gospel, wicked men will make their way into the Church. But at the end of the world we find that sinners shall be cast into a furnace of fire, where there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. But perhaps our carnal reason will object to this, and reply—How is it consistent with the goodness of God to inflict such terrible punishment for momentary crimes? To this it is answered, that though God has no pleasure in the death of sinners, yet, as He has bestowed immortality upon the human soul, He has informed His creatures that misery must be the result of following their own sinful will and happiness. They are outwith the will of God. It appears clearly from Scripture that the soul is immortal, and in spite of all the arts of infidels, in spite of their endeavours to become brutes, when they are in distress they believe the doctrine. Now, the hell mentioned in Scripture is being given up to unsanctified passions and the reflections of their own minds. If the thoughts are foul and unholy, to be given up to them is the greatest punishment. Now, the sinner can blame none but himself, for he got fair warning of his danger. The Judge of all the earth will surely do right, and it will be found hereafter that the criminals themselves will acknowledge the sentence to be just.

Verse 51.—“Jesus saith unto them, have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord.”

It is not enough that we hear doctrine and attend ordinances. It is necessary for us that we understand what we hear and reduce it to practice. If we understood what we heard we would believe, and if we believed aright, we should naturally obey. And this question may be proposed to all hearers. How many come to the house of God and hear the Gospel for many years, who remain stupidly ignorant and cannot give a reason of the hope that is in them, or give any solid argument why they believe the Christian religion? Ignorance is a common and deadly disease, even among those who pretend to have knowledge.

Verse 52.—“Every scribe taught in the Kingdom of Heaven is like an householder who bringeth out of his treasures things new and old.”

From this comparison we see the necessity there is for setting old and precious truths in a new light, that they may strike the mind and procure attention. It is necessary that the people should often hear something new. Unless the attention is kept up people are very ready to forget what they hear. It requires prayer in a clergyman for direction to

preach, not only useful truths in general, but likewise the particular truths that their spiritual wants more specially require. We read in sacred history that Goliath was struck in the forehead; we read in profane story that Achilles was wounded in the heel. However much a sinner may be entrenched in infidelity, he is vulnerable somewhere. The great art is to hit the mark, to strike so as to wound, to wound so as to make the sinner fall, and who is sufficient for these things? If he hears what he has often heard before, he seems to be prepared for the attack. To bring the truth with irresistible force to the mind it must come in a new dress, and be set in a new light to gain attention and pierce the conscience. Such as are conversant in history know that a battle has been gained by a new kind of armour and a new method of fighting.

Verses 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58.—In these words we see the force of prejudice and the natural power of unbelief. The Jews were taught to look for a carnal Messiah and a glorious conqueror, who, they expected, would raise their nation to the highest pitch of dignity and honour. As Christ made a lowly appearance among them, they could not, therefore, see the Divine power in His miracles, or the accomplishment of prophecy in His person. Deny His miracles they could not, but they despised them as performed by the reputed Son of Joseph. His nearest relations are poor, and this is the great objection to their perceiving the hand of God in His work. Fraught with ignorance and pride, and petrified with the love of the world, they despised such a meek and lowly Saviour. They forgot that David, His predecessor, was advanced from the sheepfold to the throne. Jacob, their great predecessor, passed over the Jordan with only his staff in his hand when he fled from his brother Esau, and Elijah, their great prophet and the restorer of the Law of God, was so poor that he was fed, first by the ravens, and afterwards by the widow of Zarephtha. And these men, notwithstanding their poverty and low circumstances, were high in the favour of God, and one of them wrought astonishing miracles. There is but one God, and the Old Testament, as well as the New, speaks of the Son, and commands us to worship Him; and Christ wrought miracles to prove that He was that Son, and, therefore, the object of Divine worship. If Christ wrought miracles to draw men from the worship of one God to idolatry, the Jews had been in the right to accuse Him; but He taught people to worship one God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. He taught that there were three Persons in the Divine Essence, and the very first verse of the first book of the Old Testament speaks of God in the plural number. And as His countrymen

rejected the method which Infinite Wisdom saw meet to employ to bring them to repentance and reformation, He did not work many miracles among them on account of their unbelief.

I shall conclude this lecture with some practical inferences:—

1. If Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the Gospel—if He be the Pearl of Great Price—it is our duty, like the wise merchant, to sell everything to buy the field and purchase the Pearl. This treasure, this precious Jewel, can enrich our souls. Here happiness is to be found. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. If we seek our happiness here, we need not go anywhere else in quest of it. He is the Fountain of Life and the Sun that enlightens the spiritual world.

2. If there is a spiritual state, as reason and Scripture assert, we should examine whether our conduct is such as gives us room to expect that it will be well with us hereafter. Have we fled for refuge to the Saviour to secure us from the wrath to come? Did we forsake sin, and is our peace made with God? If so, we are safe—we are happy—if not, we should flee without delay from the wrath to come. In Noah's time there was a reprieve and delay of one hundred and twenty years given people to repent of their sins. How many years have you to work out your salvation?

3. Do we understand what we hear? Do we believe the tremendous truths of Christianity? Do we understand that we have souls, and that our souls are destined for immortality? If we do not understand, how criminal is our ignorance; if we do, how guilty is our conduct before God if we do not.

4. If ministers are to have things new as well as old, it is the duty of the people to pray for them that they may be directed to the doctrines necessary for their spiritual state, whether for instruction, reproof, or consolation. Brethren, pray for our souls as well as for your own.

Lastly, we see from these words the malignant nature of unbelief. The most powerful miracles to convince them had no effect, even upon Christ's countrymen. Unbelief, then, is the great sin, the capital crime of the Christian world. It resists all the means of grace; it renders of none effect all the arguments, all the promises, threatenings, and precepts of the Word. We ought to pray to God with earnestness against the prevalence of this malignant, this deadly disease. Let us entreat God that He would enlighten our minds and soften our hearts, that we may see the glory of Christ in the Gospel.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xiv. 1-21

MIRACLES are one of the proofs of the Divine authority of Scripture. They were designed to convince unbelievers, and if they always remain in unbelief they must be inexcusable. Miracles will naturally gain attention—they are calculated to gain authority to a doctrine. Accordingly, as Moses had a new doctrine and a new dispensation to reveal to mankind, and was a promised leader to lead the people out of Egypt, he supported his pretensions by miracles. What was the doctrine of Moses? That there is but one God—that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, that this seed was to be of the tribe of Judah, and would appear when the Sceptre would depart from that tribe. What was the doctrine of Christ? That there is but one God—that the seed of the woman is come—that He was the Messiah promised—the Incarnate God. He proves His Divine mission by miracles. Now, miracles have an effect upon mankind, else God would not work them. They had an effect upon Pharaoh; hardened as he was, and at last he let the people go. And though our modern sceptics laugh at the idea of miracles, it seems their predecessors had more modesty. They did not pretend to deny facts that were attested by thousands of witnesses and spectators. Even wicked Herod acknowledged the truth. And as the scribes and Pharisees could not deny facts, they ascribe them to magic. But the malignant insinuation confutes itself. Let common-sense speak. Can evil spirits, can anything short of Almighty power, perform such works of wonder as are mentioned in the Gospels? The works wrought by our Saviour came to the ears of Herod, and, though they did not work repentance in his soul, they roused his guilty conscience, for he was afraid it was John the Baptist risen from the dead.

The piece of history respecting Herod and the miracle of the loaves shall form our meditation for this day, and, I shall, in a word, conclude with some practical inferences.

Verses 1, 2.—“At this time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus.” “And he said to his servants, This is

John the Baptist—he is risen from the dead, and, therefore, mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”

The power of conscience is great. However great the power of the wicked may be, however secret their crimes, guilt lying upon the conscience will occasionally terrify their souls. Instances similar to this occur in the history of every kingdom and country. No State, however dignified, can hide a man from his own thoughts. Vengeance pursues the sinner, and several circumstances bring his sin to remembrance, and make him uneasy amidst apparent ease and happiness. We sometimes think people happy because they have a polished outside, and they seem to have the smile of happiness upon their countenance. But if we saw their minds, they are often racked with misery and despair. Misery is the portion of wickedness even in this same life. Great crimes are attended with great torture, and the sinner reaps a part of what he sows in this same world. Murder and robbery are dreadful sins. Will not your own reflections tell you that if a man, to enrich himself and family, will turn a number of poor families adrift upon the wide world, he must feel pangs of guilt? Some of these poor creatures die of cold and diseases contracted in bad lodgings and starved circumstances. And are not the authors of their misery guilty of murder in the sight of God? Tyrants can establish iniquity by law and give it all the authority of human laws. We leave this to the stings of their own conscience. And that murder, committed directly or indirectly, will raise and leave very uneasy reflections, is clear from the history of Joseph. His brethren thought he had been dead, and that his blood had been required. And if people are accessory to the death and temporal misery of their fellow-creatures, their thoughts will make them unhappy.

Verses 3, 4.—“For Herod had taken John, and bound him, and put him in prison, for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife, for John said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.”

We learn from another of the Evangelists that Herod, before this time, had paid great attention to the doctrine of John the Baptist, and did many things. The King had some appearance of seriousness, and it is likely he had given up some other sins. But the Baptist, faithful to God, and to the souls of his hearers, would not, through flattery or false complaisance, wink at sin in any man, and, therefore, rebuked the King for his wicked deeds. Offended at the courage and faithfulness of the good man, he added this to all his other wickedness, that he put him in prison. Herod, it is likely,

could bear the faithfulness of the Baptist in other things had he spared his darling sin, but here he could not bear control. In the Baptist we have an example of faithfulness and courage becoming the faithful ministers of Christ. John is not afraid of the frown of a worthless tyrant. By winking at his faults he might procure favour and even respect for himself at Herod's Court. But had he done so he had betrayed his trust and forfeited the great character which he had supported before. Riches and respect at the expense of virtue are too dear a purchase. The Baptist's conscience would not stoop to flatter a strumpet or to encourage a tyrant in his vices. Had he lived in our days possibly some of the polite clergy would have laughed at him as an accomplished rustic that had the bad manners to see the faults of the great.

Verse 5.—“And although he was willing to put him to death, he feared the multitude, for they reckoned him as a prophet.”

Though he imprisoned him, he was afraid to imbrue his hand in his blood, and this did not arise from any principle of honour or virtue, but merely from fear. Tyrants are often afraid of the people, and they have cause. They are always ready to rise if they had a fit opportunity and found a proper man to head them. Herod was afraid of some commotion if he had put him to death. He was a murderer in intention long before he put his design in execution. Many are guilty of great crimes in the sight of God, and we are indebted to His restraining providence that the wicked are not so bad as they would incline. The fear of the law, the shame of the world or some prudential consideration, prevented them.

Verses 6-11.—“And when,” etc.

The tyrant has now a fit opportunity of putting his bloody design in execution, and gratifying the revenge of a base woman. His birthday is kept, and he stains it with the murder of an innocent person. One would think that a regard to character, to decency, and to propriety, would keep his birthday free from murder at least. But sin blinds the eyes of the mind, and when people stifle the voice of reason and conscience, it is no wonder they should be deaf to every other consideration. The daughter of Herodias came in and danced before the company, and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her anything she asked. Instructed by her worthless mother, she asks the head of the Baptist. Strange infatuation! What could a young lady make of such a present? Why did she not ask a large sum of money, or something handsome that would have innocently promoted her temporal interest, a present that had been

worthy of the royal dignity and worthy of the young lady's virtue and character? Instead of this, she stains her own soul with murder, and seals her mother's infamy. She verified the word that says, "Like mother, like daughter:" and, indeed, if free grace does not interpose, what can be expected from bad parents but bad children?

The King was sorry, and no wonder: but he pretends the conscience of an oath. And here we see the awful nature of sin; one crime begets another, and the wretched sinner seldom or never stops till he plunges his soul and body in misery and perdition.

The young lady's request is granted her, and we would think she needed not to boast of her achievement. History says that her crime did not go unpunished, that afterwards, in passing over ice, it broke under her, so that she fell in and had her head separated from her body.

And here one cannot help remarking what a slavish and unmanly part all the nobles and great men of Galilee had acted upon this occasion. There is none found to plead the cause of oppressed innocence and virtue. None of them had the courage or virtue to remonstrate with the King upon the base and unprincely part he was acting, or with the young lady upon her shameful and unnatural petition. Base and worthless as Herod was, they might have prevented his bringing such an unlucky omen upon his birthday. They might put him in mind that King David altered his resolution, though he swore to put Nabal to death. How much more fit was it for Herod to break his sinful oath and spare the Baptist? But when great men go on in wickedness they obtain evil counsellors and flatterers by way of curse.

Verses 12, 13.—In these words we find that after John's disciples had performed the last duty to their master, they returned and told Jesus. Upon this He departed unto a desert place; and numbers of people followed Him on foot from the cities.

When we read the Gospel with attention we find that Christ is true God and true Man. We have lately heard that the fulness of the godhead dwelleth in Him bodily, and, if so, why should He flee from Herod and avoid the fury of His enemies? Let it be observed that it was to suffer He came into the world, and His time for suffering was not yet come. The wisdom of God did not see it meet that our Saviour be always working miracles on all ordinary occasions. His natural life was not supported by miracles: He wrought with His hands before He was called to the ministry, nor did He support Himself by manna or work wonders to procure food after He

began to preach the Gospel. When He could avoid the fury of Herod by leaving the place He was in, He did not exert His power to deliver Himself. His name is wonderful, for He united infinite power and human weakness in His own Person. His enemies said by way of derision when He was upon the cross—"He saved others, He cannot save Himself." They spoke truth: He was crucified in weakness. He could not save Himself, for God cannot lie, and He promised to save His people by suffering in their stead.

Verse 14.—"Here we see that if He chose He could laugh at the impotent malice of Herod and all His enemies, for the Person that could work such wonderful works could restrain the fury of His enemies. By a word of His power He made those who came to apprehend Him fall backwards on the ground. When He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion and healed their sick. Could a mere man do this, or can any power less than Divine do such works as the evangelists ascribe to our Saviour? He relieved the miserable, and always granted their request,

Verses 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.—In these words we have an account of an astonishing miracle which our Lord wrought to relieve the necessity of His followers and prove the truth of His doctrine. As the evening drew nigh, His disciples inform Him that the people, who had continued now a long time hearing His heavenly instructions, should be dismissed, for a number of them had come a distance. He told them there was no necessity to send them away, and ordered them to give them food. They informed Him that they had but five loaves and two fishes, and this was far from being sufficient for such a multitude, consisting of 5000 men, besides women and children. By this account, it is likely the number of persons fed by the five loaves and two fishes amounted to 10,000 or 12,000 at least. In large congregations we may say that the women and children make up more than one-half. And here we may observe the decorum our Lord observed on this and on every other occasion. He made them sit down by ranks in order upon the green grass. He intended to work a miracle before them. But it was necessary to prepare them, for though God can do everything, He only works in behalf of those who believe. Unbelief, cursed, malignant sin, ties up as it were the hands of omnipotence. When Lazarus was to be raised, the people are prepared for what is to follow by our Lord's discourse and prayer, and by ordering to remove the stone from the mouth of the grave.

At this time, likewise, He took the loaves and fishes in His own blessed hands; He looked up to Heaven; He blessed the food, broke the loaves, and ordered His disciples to dis-

tribute them among the people. His implacable enemies, among their other wicked charges, alleged He kept correspondence with the spirits of darkness, and by the help of these performed His miracles. And, therefore, partly to confute His malignant foes, and more especially to strengthen the faith of His followers, and show us a holy example, He asked a blessing upon the food. His blessing wrought effectually, for the loaves began to multiply, and after feeding 5000 men, besides women and children, the fragments that remained were more than what was at first laid before them.

This great multitude did eat and were satisfied; they were all satisfied and left abundance. And here we cannot help observing the malicious and senseless insinuation of several unbelievers. They said that all this was but an illusion upon their senses. But several thousands could confute this senseless remark. An illusion upon the sight could never feed a hungry multitude. Evil spirits could not and would not work such miracles. A mere creature could not do these things. Wicked spirits would not destroy their own power, worship and influence. The doctrine of the Gospel was their greatest enemy. It is a doctrine of strict purity. Miracles, then, are the work of God, and He wrought them to confirm a pure and a holy doctrine. We may appeal to the common-sense of any man, and ask him, "What is his objection to the morality of the Gospel?" We are taught to worship God and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. If we are taught to believe mysteries, reason may tell us that the mystery must be true, for God cannot tell a lie.

We conclude with some practical inferences.

1. From what we heard we may learn the misery of the wicked. An evil conscience is a troublesome companion. He follows them whether they will or not. Whether the sinner lives in a cottage or in a palace, he is an object of compassion. Herod, though surrounded by flattering courtiers, living in a palace and possessed of absolute power, is afraid of John the Baptist, even after his death. And whatever sins people are guilty of, they occasionally fill them with terror.

2. We learn from these words a lesson of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God to sinners in general. People often are ready to complain of their lot, and to think how much happier they would be in a more elevated rank, or in more affluent circumstances. In these thoughts people are greatly mistaken. God not only knows what is best for us, but also what we would do in such and such circumstances. Herod and Hazeel may show us what unsanctified nature armed with power is capable of effecting. But instances of this kind are

almost innumerable. It is the sinner's mercy that he is kept in low circumstances. If he continues a devil notwithstanding the cold blast of poverty, he would soon render himself a monster if he had riches and power.

3. We here see the malignant and awful effect of bad example. Children generally follow a good deal of what they see. Herodias had a bad mother, who trained her up in the school of sin. She was accessory to her mother's crime, and had a hand in the murder of the innocent Baptist. Had Herodias the benefit of a virtuous and religious education, she might have proved a very different character. We might hear her name mentioned among the saints, and her character might have a sweet savour to the end of the world. Instead of this we hear her name with abhorrence, and young Herodias is nearly as naseous as the infamous mother that bore her. And this may teach us how much is in the power of parents. They form the character of their children, and their example often has an influence upon their everlasting state. If they train them up in a disrelish of the Gospel, or if the children catch the infection of any of the bad habits, or vicious or idle practices of their parents, they may seal their misery for ever. If parents gave a good and religious example to their children, they may be the means of their conversion to God. At any rate, they keep them from many sins into which they would otherwise fall, and by endeavouring to give them a relish for the Gospel they put them in a hopeful way of meeting the Saviour.

4. From the death of John the Baptist and the triumph of a wicked woman we have one of the strangest arguments of a future state. God often permits His people to be poor, to live despised and persecuted, and to die in misery or obscurity. He allows the meanest and most worthless of mankind to rise to notice, to thrive in the world, to prosper in vice and wickedness, and to oppress the virtuous and innocent. Are we, therefore, to suppose that God is like an idle spectator, or indifferent about what passes in this lower world? He is not. If we got one peep into the invisible world and saw but one sight of John the Baptist this day and of Herodias and her wicked mother, we would justify the providence of God, and say that He did all things well. Verily there is a reward for the righteous, and there is a God who judgeth in the earth.

5. Lastly. In the miracle wrought by Christ we may learn one substantial lesson as Christians. We have no ground to look for miracles, nor is there any necessity for them. But we may look for a Divine blessing upon our temporal concerns. We see our Lord blessed the loaves and brake them.

The disciples had but few loaves, but they brought them to Christ. Let us do the same. Our loaves may be few and our circumstances straitened. Let us bring our loaves to the Saviour that He bless them. A righteous person may have but little, but that little is better than the great riches of the wicked. If the poor man brought his loaf to the Saviour he would find the blessed effects. Instead of this, many wish to increase their loaves by sinful means, or at any rate by their unbelieving industry. Many trust more in their own exertions than in the blessing of Christ. So fares many of them—their exertions miscarry and their unbelief brings leanness upon their souls. Christians, if you trust your souls to Christ, you may trust Him with the loaves to bless them. This is a sure way to thrive in your souls and circumstances.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xiv. 22-36

WHEN we compare the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament we find that the same works that are ascribed to God are ascribed to our Lord Jesus Christ. Among other things, we read in the Book of Job, 9th chapter and 8th verse, that God treadeth upon the waves of the sea. "He maketh Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. He doeth great things past finding out; and wonders without number." But the greatest wonder He hath done is His assuming the human nature and working our redemption. Men of great learning inform us that the earth moveth round about the sun. And we may venture to affirm that several minute philosophers, who are infidels about the Gospel, are infidels also about this part of natural philosophy, or if they do believe it, they believe it as the vulgar do, upon the authority of others. The reports of philosophers may justly stagger our reason, and yet we believe things upon their authority. And may we not equally believe the astonishing truths of the Gospel, since reason may assure us that God will not, and, indeed cannot, deceive His creatures, for hear the God of truth—and He wrought great miracles to gain our belief? We shall speak a little of what you heard, and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verses 22, 23.—"And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples," etc.

After our Lord had wrought the miracle in feeding several thousands with five loaves and two fishes, He sent His disciples away, and He himself retired into a mountain to pray. Our Lord dealt much in prayer, and what was the subject of His prayers? He prayed for Himself and for His people. The Apostle to the Hebrews informs us that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears to Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. The great work He undertook required strength and assistance. In the prayers, therefore, of our Lord we have an example of the petitions that succeed at a throne of grace. Our Lord prayed from a sense of need: His petitions were not the

language of form and ceremony, but the genuine dictates of the heart. He felt His need, and prayed for assistance. That He was supported by the arm of omnipotence we learn from the 42nd chapter of Isaiah. Now, our Lord's prayers, like His great sacrifice, were offered through the Eternal Spirit, and His divine nature gave a dignity and savour to both that rendered them acceptable. But we are told that Christ is God, and what need had He to pray? Answer—He was Man, and as such He prayed that His human nature would be enabled to support the great burden He had to bear. And He was supported, as He was Man, to suffer for all His people. And He often took opportunities to pray. Profane worldlings may think that the people of God spend more time than they need in prayer at religious duties. Like graceless Pharaoh, they may say and think they are idle and have little to do. Christians, however, will find use for their prayers at death. Christ saw what was before Him, and He prepared Himself by prayer, and so ought we. And would not you think yourself happy if you thought yourself one of those for whom He prayed in the Mount? Did you, and do you, put a value upon His prayers, and do your prayers, like His, proceed from a sense of need or a strong desire to be found in Christ and have an interest in His prayers? And as our Lord prayed for Himself that He might obtain strength to perform the great work of Redemption, I have no doubt but He prayed for all His people by name. He undertook for them all: they lay upon His heart and were engraven upon the palms of His hands. And if there is such astonishing efficacy in the prayers of His poor people, though mixed with many weaknesses, imperfections, and blemishes, how powerful must the prayers of our Great High Priest have been! It was His prayers that put life and vigour in every prayer that ever ascended to heaven and found acceptance at the throne. His prayers were valid upon earth. He knew to whom He was praying, and they never returned empty. Happy are the souls for whom He is praying in Heaven; they shall be sure to obtain His help though He should delay coming to their assistance to the fourth watch of the night. But some poor soul will say—"How will I know whether He prays for me, as my prayers are so weak and worthless?" Answer—Is it not your desire to put your prayers in the hands of the great Mediator, and to be accepted by His merits? If so, your prayers are heard and will be accepted. I was reading in the last newspaper that there were three farthings coined in the reign of Queen Anne—they were so valuable because so few that a poor man who found one of them obtained £400 sterling for a single farthing. Now, your prayer, though of small value itself, will be found strong and

powerful, because it comes recommended by the prayers of Christ. But though Christ was happy praying in the Mount, we see His poor disciples in great distress by a storm at sea.

Verses 24, 25.—“But the ship was already in the midst of the sea,” etc.

Our Lord, we find, had ordered His disciples to go to the other side, and He went to pray in the Mount. From these words we make the following remarks :—

1. Though our Lord knew all things, and, therefore, that the storm was coming, He left them and went to pray in the Mount.

2. Again, we see that though He knew their distress, He delays coming to their assistance till the fourth watch of the night.

3. That though they were tossed by winds and waves, they were perfectly safe, for He came to their assistance.

The ship that carried the disciples is a true emblem of His Church. We cannot exactly say what were the particular corruptions of His followers which this dispensation was calculated to cure. And He had causes best known to Himself for delaying coming to their assistance to the latter end of the night. The affections of his people are wisely ordered by our Saviour, as well as the time appointed for their relief. His prayers in the mount kept them safe on the sea, and His prayers in Heaven keep His people safe upon earth. He came to their relief walking upon the sea. And His providence always interposes right early for His Church. He knew when He should come to their assistance. If He delays His help till the fourth watch of the night, so much the more signal shall be the deliverance. He came walking upon the sea, and sometimes His providence is wonderful, and His works and ways unsearchable. If there are remarkable prayers there will be remarkable providences. Let us wait His time, and He will surely come to our deliverance.

Verses 26, 27.—“And when the disciples saw Him,” etc.

We may naturally believe that the disciples when tossed by the waves and in danger of sinking to the bottom, lifted up their souls to heaven, and cried for assistance. No doubt, they were longing for their Lord and Master, and, like Martha and Mary upon another occasion, might think if He had been present they had not been in such danger of their lives. It is likely that several distracting and unbelieving thoughts passed through their minds upon this trying occasion. Now, will they reconcile the present appearance of Providence with the opinion they had formed of Messiah and the promises that

He had given them? Their faith and their unbelief alternately preponderate, and they are allowed for a time to be tossed upon the waves before there is the least prospect of relief. At last, when all hope was gone, and they had given themselves up for lost, they see a strange sight upon the lake—the appearance of a man walking upon the water. Struck with terror and astonishment, they cried out, for they supposed they had seen a ghost. It was a common opinion among all nations that there are spectres and visions of the night. Such they supposed the present appearance to be—they thought it a dreadful omen, and that it portended their death. Our Lord cheered their drooping spirits, and informed them that He was the Great Being, whom winds and waves must obey. He makes use of the same expression which Moses was directed to make use of to the children of Israel in Egypt—“Be of good cheer—I am—be not afraid.” Our Lord, indeed, bids them be of good cheer, but He does not in plain language inform them, or even insinuate, that there are no spirits of the night. He leaves us in the dark as to that subject; He teaches, indeed, to be afraid of no being, but that great Being who has life and death at His command.

And here we may observe that the disciples were in the same situation of mind which many of His people before and since have been in, when He comes to their relief. A little before, He comes in a wonderful interposition of providence to relieve Jacob. We hear Him exclaiming—“All these things are against me.” When Moses meets with a repulse from Pharaoh, he complains to God—“Thou hast not delivered Thy people at all.”

And this is true also in a spiritual view. When He comes to make a work upon the souls of His people at first and arrest them by the law before He relieves them, they are afraid of Him, and think He means to destroy them.

They are troubled with their corruptions, the body of sin which is in their members. They pray against it. The answer terrifies them. The way God purifies them is by giving them a strong feeling of unbelief, a sight of their corruptions, and a powerful flood of temptation. When they are tossed by these dreadful waves, their Redeemer comes in the fourth watch of the night, walking upon the waves, and He says to the winds and raging billows, “Peace be still,” and there is a calm and serenity in the soul—They have joy and peace in believing.

Verses 28, 29, 30, 31.—“Peter answering said,” etc.

Peter was a man of a bold and intrepid spirit and great love to his Saviour. Whenever he knew His voice, he begged

leave to walk to Him upon the waves. Our Lord, partly to reward Peter's faith, partly to show how little he could do independently of Divine aid, bade him come forward. Peter, like many others, thought he had more faith than he actually possessed. Accordingly, he proceeded with some degree of confidence, but finding the sea rough and the waves high, for the wind was strong, he became afraid, and began to sink. Whenever he began to sink, he cried to the Lord to save him. Upon this He reached His hand to him, supported his sinking faith and his sinking person, and at the same time rebuked him for his unbelief in that he was afraid when his Lord was so near him.

And is not this our own case? He bids us come to Him. We scarcely make two steps when our faith begins to fail, and, forgetful of all that ever He has done for us, our hopes begin to sink and unbelief to swallow us up. If we have the appearance of faith at some particular times, how soon does the trial show us how weak and inconstant we are. Unless the Lord reach His hand to us we would soon sink in the waves of affliction and trouble. Have not our souls cause to bless His name that He has often proved our help, and that right early, when He saw our hope was gone and we had no other help?

Verse 32—"And when they came into the ship the wind ceased."

Our Lord, who sometimes walks upon the wings of the wind, at this time walked upon the waves of the sea. Although Peter was afraid, the sea to Him was as dry land. The storm and tempest did not affect Him. He allowed the storm to rage till such time as He came to the ship, and then the wind ceased. And this happened merely for the sake of His disciples. While He was with them in the ship they were safe, but while the storm continued they had been terribly afraid, and, therefore, to compose their minds, He silences the wind and waves. Though the ship was safe when Christ walked upon the sea to their relief, they did not see themselves safe and happy till they got Him with them. And is not this the case with us? When a person gets a sight of Christ coming upon the waves to his relief he is perfectly safe, though he does not see himself perfectly happy. Nothing can do this but some degree of assurance, and this is like being in the ship with Christ.

Where there is true faith, it labours after assurance, and where there is humble assurance it pants after the full assurance of faith. And if a person may ask, What is the difference between the assurance of faith and the presumption of many? the text affords an answer. When Christ came to the ship

there was a calm, and when He comes to the soul He breaks the power of sin. If people are tossed by their passions, and slaves to their lusts, they have the faith of presumption, and not the faith that purifies the heart. Even such of the people of God as are tossed with temptations and corruptions, see only Christ coming upon the waves to save them. Others of them have Him sleeping in the ship. They do not wish Him to awake till He please. Should a storm arise against such, they have only to cry to Him. He immediately rebukes the winds and the waves, and there is a calm. And no man should rest satisfied till he gets the faith that purifies the heart. Victory over the passions, lusts, and affections will give peace and serenity to the soul. The blood of sprinkling will purge the conscience from dead works, and the spirit of prayer will give strength and power against corruption and sin. While the wind and tide of corruption are strong, endeavours are ineffectual; we can never be at ease till Christ comes to the ship, and then there is a calm.

Verse 33—"And they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Truly Thou art the Son of God."

The great mystery of godliness is this, that God was manifested in the flesh: that the Son of God became Man: that Jesus Christ was the Messiah promised in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And how did Christ prove that He was so? By the great works He wrought. Now, these works carried such evident demonstration of Divine power that they brought conviction to the mind all at once. If a man did not chose to shut his eyes he could not refuse to acknowledge what he saw. Now, the illiterate mechanic and the unpolished rustic were as capable of examining miracles and judging what they saw, and bearing honest testimony to the truth, as the most acute and learned philosopher. And is it not either stupid ignorance or gross partiality, if not both, in those who object to the truth of the Gospel that the bulk of those who embraced it were men without letters? Now, it may be asked, can anything be more unreasonable than this objection? If two men claimed the greatest estate in the kingdom, would the witnesses adduced by either party be objected to because they are not scholars? I think not. When people are tried for treason or any other great crime, will their counsel take any exception against the witnesses because they are not philosophers and men of liberal education? No. Now, the men in the ship were competent witnesses of what they saw. They could tell they saw a Man walking upon the water. That it proved to be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; that there was a calm whenever He came to the ship. And what would still more strengthen their faith, they could declare they saw Peter

also walking upon the sea, and that he began to sink till Jesus reached his hand and kept him above water.

How silly, then, is the objection of an infidel. There cannot be such a thing as a miracle, and, therefore, he will not believe. Let us turn the tables upon him and examine his argument. I acknowledge, indeed, that an infidel is a wonderful phenomenon in the Christian world; but the spirit of prophecy takes notice of them and acquaints us they would arise. Let us, however, put the case that several persons in an island or remote corner had been trained up in the purest principles of Christianity till they became men. Some persons inform them that a wonderful King had appeared in England; that he denied the truths of Christianity and the miracles of the Gospel. Let us now suppose that one or two of these good men exclaim—"Impossible; there is no such monster in nature as the person you style an infidel." He is informed by credible witnesses that there are infidels; that they saw and heard them; and that there are accounts in books of some few that were in England two hundred years ago. Would not these good Christians be thought very unreasonable if they refused to believe eye-witnesses and the authority of books that were known to be true and believed in the kingdom for two centuries? I dare say an infidel would reckon them very unreasonable in their unbelief. But he ought to consider that he himself is as great a curiosity to this same Christian as a miracle can be to an infidel. And what hinders the Christian from believing that there is such a creature? Prejudice. Now, whether he believes such creatures are or not, there are infidels. And whether infidels believe in miracles or not, there have been miracles, and people have been gained by miracles to the belief of the Gospel. The men in the ship acknowledged that Jesus Christ was in truth the Son of God.

Verses 34, 35, 36.—"And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Genesaret, and when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

After our Lord had calmed the winds and the waves, they came into the country of Genesaret. The people of that place acted as His followers do to this day. Our Lord had a great following, notwithstanding He had a great number of enemies. Now, enemies are never at a loss for expressions to vilify the characters of those whom they wish to hurt. His followers, however, knew that all their ill-natured and

virulent invectives could not alter the nature of truth. His miracles were notorious facts, and facts are stubborn things: they cannot be controverted. He has repeatedly cured the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, and raised the dead. The people of Genesaret knew all this, and, therefore, they brought their sick and diseased to Him, in order to be healed. They had even such faith in Him that when any of them touched the hem of His garment they were healed. And this is the case with all true Christians.

Whatever unbelievers may say against the Gospel, they have experience of the truth of it in the work which the Spirit of God made upon their souls. Infidels may laugh at this as the language of fools. The plain English of that is this—I do not understand what you say; you must be, therefore, a fool. A man without learning comes to the library of a great scholar; a Latin or Greek author is put in his hands; he cannot read it, and, therefore, it is nonsense. And this is the logic of an infidel. It is a fact that several thousands in the kingdom—men of sound sense and good behaviour, and a number of them men of great learning—could declare upon the word of honest men, that whereas they were blind, now they see. The Pharisees could not persuade the man born blind that Christ had not cured him. His simple reasoning overcomes their chicanery and unbelief, and though confuted by the strength of his arguments, they had not the candour or honesty to acknowledge the truth, or see the hand of God in the MIRACLE. The people of Genesaret were healed by touching the hem of His garment. And could any of these people be persuaded that this did not happen? Must they not have believed in His Divine mission, and that He was the Son of God of a truth?

It is true there are no miracles now in the Church. The bodies of men are not healed by a touch of the Saviour. Miracles, however, are wrought upon the minds of people. The unchaste are made clean; the dissipated, sober and honest, and the unbeliever a saint; and this happens by having faith in the Gospel wrought in your souls. They live such a pure and holy life as no infidel can live, and they obtain such comfort at death as surprises and delights the spectators. And this happened by touching the hem of Christ's garment. In plain language, they believed, and by doing so they experienced the power of Christ in healing and sanctifying their souls.

And how different is their life and death from the life and death of the votaries of pleasure and the promoters of infidelity. The death of infidels has often been awful, Faith has healed the souls of Christians. Their lives have been useful, and their death edifying and pleasant.

I conclude with some practical inferences.

First—If Christ went up into the Mount to pray, how great is our need? He had a work to perform worthy of a God. He therefore prayed that His human nature might be strengthened to bear the burden and perform the work. And we have a work also to perform. We are desired in Scripture to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and to make our calling and election sure. We are not sufficient of ourselves for this work; we must, therefore, depend upon the assistance of another, and look up for help to God. The constant struggle between virtue and vice in the soul, the solicitations of pleasure, and the evil example of the world around us, are surely very powerful arguments to engage us to pray. If we slacken our diligence in prayer, we shall be like Moses when he hung down his hands. We must support the hands of faith and prayer that we may subdue our spiritual enemies. Let us retire from the world after the example of our Saviour, and spend some time in prayer in the Mount. Our Saviour often retired to a mountain to pray and keep up communion with Heaven. Did the success of His enemies, the suggestions of His friends or acquaintances, or any other avocation whatever divert Him from this necessary and delightful duty?

His prayers returned with a rich answer from Heaven. His human nature became victorious. He satisfied the justice of God and bore our sins. He conquered our spiritual enemies, and made a show of them openly. Would you gain spiritual victories? Retire from the world. Go up to the mount to your Saviour. Moses went up to the hill of Pisgah, and got a view of the promised land. Abraham got a glorious promise in the Mount, and it was upon a mount that the three Apostles got a glimpse of the Glory of Christ, and a sight of Moses and Elijah. Let us follow their example.

Secondly—Are we tossed by the waves of affliction and temptation? And is our Saviour now removed to the Mountain of Myrrh and the hill of Frankincense, and, therefore, in our own view at a greater distance from us than He was from His disciples when in the ship? Let us then remember that though He is now in Heaven, He is present with His people by His Spirit, and by the sweet workings of His providence. Though storms arise, and they are tossed with tempests, their vessel will be safe. The storm is sent for their good and for the trial of their faith and patience. Let us not complain because such and such things come in our way which God might easily prevent. Had our Saviour prevented the storm, the disciples had not had such comfort by a kindly breeze as they had by His seasonable appearance for their relief. The illustrious

display of His power in walking upon the sea must have naturally strengthened their faith, and filled their souls with joy and astonishment.

Thirdly—From what we heard we learn that troubles are often blessings in disguise.

The people of God often when they see the trouble approaching are ready with the disciples to cry out with fear. Guilt and unbelief may put awful constructions upon the dark dispensations of providence. But under this appearance it is the Saviour coming to their relief. And how does this appear? Answer—Afflictive providences are calculated to rouse the conscience and to make people fear in their hearts and examine their conduct. Conscience gets a calm and impartial hearing, and they begin to see for what they get the stroke. Affliction humbles the heart and makes people to forsake their darling idols, and come weary and heavily-laden to Christ. And though unbelief may suggest that the dispensation is calculated to destroy them, it will be found to have a very different and contrary effect. And when they submit to sovereignty and know that He is God, their captivity is turned like streams in the south, and they know that the affliction has humbled and purified them, and given health and vigour to their spiritual constitution. When the peccant humours are expelled, their spiritual appetite is restored, their strength returns, and they run the way of God's commandments with alacrity and vigour. They proceed from strength to strength, and never stop till they appear perfect before God in Zion.

Lastly—We find that a touch of the hem of Christ's garment brought health and cure to the diseased.

And should not we imitate their example? It is more than probable that in a great concourse of people following the Saviour, several individuals could not get access to come to speak to Him and reveal their cases particularly. Necessity teaches them to take a short method. They touch the hem of his garment, and are immediately cured. And this may happen to us. Several poor souls complain they cannot get access to the Saviour; they are so choked with unbelief, with temptation, and corruption. In this case, let them touch the hem of His garment. They heard about Him. Let them, then, trust in His power. And though at a distance, like a person that could only touch the hem of the garment, let them wait in the means they enjoy, and let them believe. There is no person under the Gospel but may have access to the hem of His garment. If people happen to have but a small degree of knowledge, or have not full access to the means of grace—even then, let them attempt to believe and follow

Christ, and this will effect their spiritual cure. A person, wishing to speak to Christ, and not able by reason of the crowd, found her health restored by touching the hem of His garment. He knew her wish and answered her desire. He knows when we wish to believe, and have a desire to get sin broken ; and though people cannot speak to Him, He knows where the sincere wish and the honest desire is, for this will produce honest endeavours after holiness and obedience. The man does his duty according to the light he has, and Christ meets his wish and heals his soul. He can read the wishes of those who cannot speak, and the famished beggar in his extremity will draw virtue from Christ to feed and cure his soul.

May God bless His own Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xv. 1-20

THE Scripture in every part is in perfect harmony with itself. It was the same spirit that dictated the whole. The doctrine of the prophets agrees in everything with the doctrine of the Apostles. The design of the Gospel is to sanctify the nature and reform the life. But as religion is designed for spirits that dwell in bodies, it must have something in it that will strike the senses. Accordingly, the religion of the Jews was full of pomp and parade, full of ceremonies and acts imposed upon them till the time of the Gospel. Such, however, has been the corruption of human nature that people in all ages have been taken up more with the ceremonial part of religion than with the substance and spirit. As it is this day, it has been in the time of our Saviour. Our Lord showed them the danger of false opinions and immoral practices, and the emptiness of that religion that can rest in ceremony and fall short of true Christian piety, and the love of God. And there is cause to fear that we are more guilty in this respect than the Jews themselves. We have more light and knowledge, but what have we besides? Covetous as they were reckoned, they did not grudge to pay costly sacrifices. But a man of religion such as this will grudge any part of religion that will in the slightest degree thwart his temporal interest, or bid forsake what he reckons his ideal.

I shall explain the words in the order in which they lie, and conclude with some practical improvements.

Verses 1, 2.—“Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the Elders, for they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

We often find mention made in the Gospel of the Scribes and Pharisees. The one was a sect among the Jews, and the other was their leaders and spiritual guides. Now, these persons were people that, under the mark of piety, not only neglected the duties of morality, but even were guilty of flagrant immoralities. They were full of covetousness, vain-glory, and revenge. It is true they could make long prayers, but they did not scruple to devour widows’

houses. They could take of the outside of religion as much as did not interfere with their temporal interest. If a man fell in with their views and extolled them for their superior sanctity, they would embrace him as a brother, and cry him up for a good man. But when the Saviour exposed their principles and their practices, they endeavoured to make Him feel the heaviest stroke of their resentment. And if we investigate the character of people of the same stamp and spirit we shall find they follow the same line of conduct according to their power. We have a number of people among us that profess religion. They can pray in public, speak about Divine things, and edify us with their own experiences. But if a man should talk ever so elegantly about meat and drink, if he seldom taste either, and for the most part have an aversion to food, he will soon fall into sickness, and if he perseveres, it will end in his death. We see people attending means when it suits their temporal interest; if it does not we must excuse them. Observe the conduct of your religious people. Follow them to the market, to the high-road, and to the public-house. Notice their conduct through the week, and if you are actuated by the spirit of your Saviour and rebuke them for the shameful inconsistency of their conduct, you will soon know what they shall do. The Pharisee is offended if you have the impudence to see the spot that is in his face. People that live in gross immoralities (if intemperance, dishonesty, and revenge deserve this name) will readily find fault with others for things of very little consequence. The Scribes and Pharisees blamed our Lord and His disciples for eating bread with unwashed hands. The rulers of the Jews, who had no scruples to murder an innocent and holy person, would not go to the judgment hall for fear of polluting themselves. Such persons can strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

Verses 3, 4.—“But He answering said unto them, Wherefore do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition, for God hath commanded, saying—Honour thy father and mother, and whosoever curseth his father and mother let him die the death.”

In these words we see the wisdom and the dignity with which our Lord met the accusation of His invidious enemies. As if He had said, “Be it so that I have transgressed the tradition of the elders, that is a small thing in itself and of no consequence as to the interests of morality. But why do you break the law of God?” Our Lord here opposes question to question, and His enemies could give no answer but such as would condemn themselves. He taxes them in particular with a breach of the Fifth Commandment, but our Lord thought

and acted very differently. He Himself, though the Son of God and Lord of Glory, yet as Man was obedient to His poor parents, and paid them respect, and even upon the cross recommended His mother to His beloved disciple.

As the Fifth Commandment implies in it obedience of every kind, both civil and spiritual, our Lord by His example and doctrine inculcated this part of moral duty. He paid tribute Himself and taught His hearers to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. He taught them to respect their spiritual rulers, for He went to the synagogue and desired His disciples to follow what was praiseworthy in their doctrine. This, however, was not the practice of those who asked the question, for our Lord tells us—verse 5—“But ye say whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father and his mother, then have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”

It seems it was customary among the Jews to devote their substance to God by vow, and the practice was encouraged by the teachers, and redounded to their own advantage. The undutiful child pleaded exemption from the duty he owed to his parents that he gave either his substance or his service to God. And the spirit of this very tradition of the Pharisees is still among many hypocritical professors. When required to perform the essential duties of religion and morality they think they have done enough if they perform in a formal manner some of the easier duties of religion. Our Lord shows us the emptiness of such pretensions, and couches His rebuke to such characters in pretty severe terms.

Verses 7, 8, 9.—“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you, saying, This people draweth near to Me with their mouth and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.”

In these words the people that were led and the teachers that did mislead are equally reprehended. And they show us this useful and edifying lesson, that people may have the form of religion and observe some dead ceremonies, while their hearts and affections are not engaged in the work. We see here that people are often fonder of what is merely human in what concerns religion than they are of the vitals and life of religion in the souls. And this remark will apply to professors in the purest Church upon earth. Under every form of religion people may satisfy themselves in that very form without the power. We find that half professors (and these form the majority among all sorts of Christians upon

earth) are more taken up with what peculiarly distinguishes them from other parties than they are with the essential doctrines and true spirit of Christianity. And it sometimes happens that people who contend for the orthodox faith and doctrines are not very remarkable for the orthodoxy of their morals. And will not the words of our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees apply to such that they are hypocrites who draw near to God with their lips, while their heart is far from Him. And our Lord rectified their mistake.

Verses 10, 11.—“For He called the multitude and said to them, Hear ye and understand, it is not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which proceedeth out of the mouth defileth the man.”

The doctrine of our Lord in these words is that the observation of a ceremony of mere human authority is not binding upon the conscience, and, therefore, indifference about it will not attach guilt to the soul. And this will apply to what is merely human in every church upon earth. How awful, then, in churchmen to have put these things in a level almost with the articles of faith. It will apply to churchmen of all denominations. This is obvious to a judicious observer. Alas ! we are guilty in this respect.

Verses 12, 13, 14.—“Then came to Him His disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees upon hearing this word were offended. But He answering said, Every plant whom my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone—they are blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch.”

Pure and holy as the Saviour was in His nature and in His life, pure and holy as His doctrines were, they were far from pleasing all men. It is true, multitudes followed Him when they saw His miracles and witnessed the glorious works and wonderful cures He performed. But though fairer than the sons of men, though grace was poured into His lips, and though He spake as never man did, His doctrine gave offence. No sooner did He begin to inform the multitude that His Kingdom was not of this world, no sooner did He strike at the doctrines that were current among the teachers, at the opinions and practices of the multitude, than they began to cool, and many of them began to go back. When He pointed out the mere emptiness of external ceremonies and washings and the necessity of something more substantial in religion than mere outside, they took alarm, and He met with a very formidable opposition. The Pharisees were offended at the doctrines He preached : the blind leaders gave the alarm to the blind

multitude, and the conspiracy at last turned very strong. When the disciples informed Him of the offence His doctrine gave, He informed them that every plant not planted by His Heavenly Father would be rooted up, and then showed them the danger of blind teachers and their deluded followers.

“Every plant not planted by my Heavenly Father shall be rooted up,” and this remark equally affects doctrines as well as persons. And it affects this day as well as it did in our Saviour’s time. The Scribes and Pharisees were rooted out of the Church of God, as well as their empty and unsubstantial doctrines. And with regard to doctrines and opinions not founded upon Scripture, the remark will apply to many of the people of God. If there is any plant in them not planted by their Heavenly Father it shall, it must, be rooted up. Opinions and practices that are not agreeable to the sure word of revelation will be destroyed at last. The word is what is to try both, and we should be cautious in admitting what can not be clearly proved from these lively oracles. The danger of false doctrines and false teachers is clear from our Saviour’s comparison. If the blind lead the blind both will naturally fall into the ditch. People without concern for their souls, who are blind as to their best interests, cannot lead others. And when they do not lead, they must, of course, mislead, and an error here is of most fatal tendency. We should, therefore, be open to conviction, and earnestly and assiduously cry to Heaven for the Heavenly illumination of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto all truth. As the book of God is in our hands, we should pray that it may be also in our hearts. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and in His light we shall see light.

Verses 15, 16, 17, 18.—“And Peter answering, said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye yet without understanding? Do you not perceive that everything that entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast into the draught? But the things that come out of the mouth proceed from the heart, and these defile the man.”

Our Lord in these words, after reprimanding Peter for his slowness in understanding spiritual truths, informs His disciples in general what defiles a man. Eating food without washing the hands is a matter of mere ceremony, and does not defile the man. What defiles him is what proceeds from the heart. The heart is the fountain of life or of death, and we may know whether the fountain is poisonous or not by the waters that proceed from it. This is clear, for our Lord says:—

Verses 19, 20—“For from the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blas-

phemies—these are the things that defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.”

Such as are acquainted with Scripture and human nature will readily acknowledge that the plagues of the heart are so manifold that one would think people need not add imaginary sins to the number of sins that are really and truly such. Churchmen have found out the way of imposing supernumerary duties upon the people, and have made the breach of these duties a sin. Our Lord, however, informs us what opinion to form of mere human authority in matters that are spiritual and Divine. We should know our liberty in things wherein Christ hath made us free, and not be entangled again by the yoke of bondage.

Our Lord, however, informs us what are the things that defile the man—evil thoughts or reasonings. Now, thoughts and reasonings defile the mind in several respects. People may be guilty in the sight of God of many sins which they never get the opportunity or the power to commit. It is at the heart that every sin begins. It is the fruitful forge of every iniquity. The thoughts are polluted before people proceed to actions. And not only do evil thoughts, strictly so-called, defile the soul, but also evil reasonings. While the reason is sinful and unsanctified, it will produce evil reasonings. It is oft only by evil reasonings that people are kept from their duty, and are seduced to commit sin. The first reasoning was this—“Ye shall not surely die.” The next reasoning was, that the fruit was pleasant to the eye, fit for food, and calculated to make one wise, and by their combined force the woman was tempted to her ruin. Her soul was polluted before she defiled her body by the outward act of sin. And this is the case to this very day. “When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and when sin is finished, it bringeth forth death.” “Evil thoughts and false reasonings are the things that keep people in the snares of Satan and in the chains of sin all their days. These are the poisonous sources of all the false religions upon earth. These polluted vapours spread their baneful influence over all the human race, and produce all that flood of sin and misery of which we are the constant spectators while we sojourn in this world.”—N.B.—Mark vii. 21.

Another of the things that defile a man is murder. And, indeed, the grossest acts of this sin are so repugnant to the light of nature, as well as to the light of Scripture, that it is astonishing how it could be committed in a country where there are any traces of civilisation, and more especially in a country blessed with the light of the Gospel. Scripture

informs that a murderer hath not eternal life in him, and this shows us the dreadful nature of that sin, and the danger of sinful anger, malice, and wickedness of that kind. If we retain such thoughts in our hearts we are not fit to receive the pardon of sin. Our Lord teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and informs us that if we do not forgive we shall not be forgiven. As Christians, we profess to be the royal offspring of heaven. Well might we, then, apply to ourselves what a heathen poet applied to his heathen gods—"Dwells such resentment in heavenly minds?" If we are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, the disciples of the humble and heavenly Saviour, how comes it that we entertain thoughts of anger, hatred, malice, and revenge? These thoughts are but heart murder, and they greatly defile the soul, deprive it of its happiness, light, and beauty, and transform it into a mere demon or spirit of darkness, for he that hateth his brother is of the devil.

But again, adulteries and fornications proceed from the heart and defile the man. Indeed, all these sins have such a tendency to defile the heart, the affections, and the life, that they generally go by the name of uncleanness. It takes away the heart, and sinks the soul into the grossest kind of idolatry. It forces the soul into the most abject state of slavery. And few of those who go on in this sin ever return to God or repent. This sin is so dangerous that one of the fathers of the Church said that it was as difficult to bring a dead man to life as to make a lustful man chaste and pure. King David was so sensible of the danger of uncleanness that he cried to God to create in him a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within him. Young people often flatter themselves that they will forsake sin and repent when they become old. In this hope, alas, they are fatally deceived. Old men are often as guilty in this respect as those who are young. A more awful spectacle does not exist upon earth than the old sinner who curses himself for the follies of his youth, except the stupid wretch who is judicially hardened and can talk no language but the language of hell, and can boast of no more glorious exploits than the actions of a brute. How miserable is the portion of the old sinner who reflects that he gave his youth to the devil, that he has given his strength to the service of sin, that he has wasted his body and destroyed the faculties of his mind! He has no pleasure in life, and the thought of death and judgment must be awful to his soul. His thoughts are foul, and his impure soul is unfit for the pure pleasures of the heavenly state. He is an impure spirit, and a fit companion for the spirits of darkness. His dark and polluted soul must be miserable, for his unruly passions, his filthy

thoughts, and his enraged conscience will be his tormentors for ever and ever. These are some of the sins that defile a man, make him abominable here, and miserable hereafter. May God awaken such sinners.

Theft is another sin that defiles the man. St Mark mentions with theft, covetousness. And the covetous man is a thief, for Judas is reckoned a thief, though we do not read that he actually stole; but he was covetous, and, therefore, a thief in the sight of God. The desire of accumulating wealth defiles the soul, and fills the heart with racking and uneasy thoughts, and pierces people with many sorrows. The love of money is the root of all evil. The covetous man defiles his own soul, makes himself unhappy, and others often miserable. And though he loses his soul to enrich others, his heirs will not thank him for what he has done.

St Mark, after covetousness, mentions wickedness and deceit. And this may point at the different kinds of villainy and tricks that people use in order to overreach their neighbours and enrich themselves. And these thefts greatly defile them and hurt their souls.

False witness defiles the soul; and this sin often proceeds from covetousness also. Why does one man sell his own soul but to hurt another? People bear false witness by going about as tale-bearers, by raising a lie to hurt their neighbours, or by swearing before a judge. These are awful sins, and defile the man's soul, and expose him to the curse of God.

Blasphemy likewise defiles the soul. And this is a great sin, whether it be against man or against God. We blaspheme man when we asperse his character with a view to hurt him. We blaspheme God when we speak against Him or against His Word and Providence.

St Mark mentions likewise an evil eye, pride and foolishness as things that defile the man. Now, an evil eye is a covetous eye, full of envy and ill-will at the good of our neighbour, proceeding from a heart that would wish to do him all the hurt we can. If I wished to gratify your curiosity I might, upon this occasion, mention to you the opinion of the ancients with respect to the malignant influence of an evil eye. But we are a philosophical generation, and we pretend to more wisdom than our ancestors had. We laugh at the existence of witches and the influence of an evil eye. They are mentioned, however, in Scripture, and our Saviour mentions an evil eye as one of the sins that defile the soul. But though Scripture mentions these sins to us, I pretend not to explain to you how, or how far, their influence may extend, or dare be wise above what is written.

Pride defiles the soul. It cast the devil out of heaven; it cast Adam out of Paradise, and it will cast thousands and many tens of thousands into hell. To show how odious this sin is, Scripture assures us that God resisteth the proud; and even men, corrupt and wicked as they are generally, conspire against a man that is eminently proud and wish to humble him. The sin of the proud man constantly defiles him, and makes him uneasy to himself and others. No man, he thinks, gives him that respect which he thinks is due to him. The soul of a proud man is like a skin abused with the itch—you must dip a feather in oil and handle it gently, otherwise the least touch will hurt it. And if the proud man is not constantly flattered you cannot please him. Strong common-sense may cast a veil over pride and hide it from the superficial observer. But it is a fact that will always prove true that no man will sooner obtain favour from a proud man than a flatterer. And the wise flatterer, like the wise lover, will flatter in private, and is sure to succeed. Pride is natural to the heart of man. It was our first sin, and the last, perhaps, that will be conquered and expelled. We may appeal to our own hearts whether flattery pleases us. Tell an ordinary man, that he has all the qualifications of a hero, or a silly woman that she has all the accomplishments that adorn her sex, and if you have the address to give your words the appearance of sincerity, you gain their hearts and obtain their favour and friendship. Pride insinuates itself into everything we do. There is something in our natures analogous to what philosophers call attraction. Pride always finds or draws something to feed upon. Riches, learning, religion, intellectual abilities, and especially fine clothes, are the fuel that feed this fire. It makes us impatient of contradiction; it makes us look down with contempt upon those that differ with us; it makes us laugh at the follies and foibles of mankind, and it often exposes ourselves to the laughter of fools in our turn. Pride is the offspring of ignorance: no man would be proud if he knew himself. The more a man has of the grace of God, the more humble he is. Our Lord Jesus Christ had in Him the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He was the humblest Man upon the face of the earth. Satan, the Prince of Devils, is the greatest sinner that exists, and he is the proudest creature in all creation. The more we are puffed with pride or adorned with humility, the more we resemble the one or the other. In a word, pride defiles and debases the soul.

Lastly, foolishness leads up the rear of the sins that defile the soul.

Foolishness here, as in several parts of Scripture, signifies the folly of sin. "Be not foolish, but understanding what the

will of the Lord is," says the Apostle. We see some men astonishingly clever and alert in managing the affairs of this world, and availing themselves of every proper opportunity that offers to improve their means. But examine them as to the state of their souls—they are as blind as moles. Nay, there are some people would be thought wise and sensible persons that are perfectly ignorant and brutish as to the state of their souls. Now, these sins which we have heard mentioned are the things that defile the man. The due observance of the ceremonial part of religion will not sanctify our souls, but the practice of sin is sure to defile them, and this is the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We conclude with some practical inferences. That professors are the greatest sinners—occasion sins of others—Ezekiel xxxvi. 20.

First. How vain and empty, therefore, the religion of those who perform some easy and superficial duties and neglect the first and leading duty of religion, the love of God, and the essential duties of morality : the keeping of the Commandments.

Second. That it is a great sin in the rulers of the Church to put things of lesser moment upon a level with the great articles of religion and essential moral duties. And this sin is still more highly aggravated when the one jostles out the other. Washing the hands before dinner was more essential in the eye of the Pharisee than obedience to parents and other weighty duties of the law.

Third. That the doctrine of our Lord gave offence to the Pharisees. Light is said to hurt the eyes of the mole. And to such as have the eyes of their minds blinded with prejudice or sunken in sin, the clear light of God's Word must be equally painful. They cannot bear the light because their deeds are evil. If we are of the light we can bear the doctrines of the light, and have our deeds examined by the light. Such doctrines and deeds as cannot bear the light are not from God.

Lastly. We see that sin of every kind sinks and debases the soul. It should, then, be our main concern to avoid those things that spoil the beauty and lustre of our minds and sink them down in matter. Sin is the disease of our souls. We should come to the Gospel for health and cure, and when we obtain this, the exercise of faith and holiness will always keep them bright and pure.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xv. 21-39

THE manifold wisdom of our Lord and Saviour is manifest as a teacher. He constantly went about doing good to the souls and bodies of people. He adapted His doctrine to the spiritual state and conditions of those that heard Him. The proud and self-righteous He sends to the law, and by so doing He condemns him out of his own mouth. The young ruler, proud of his duties and highly pleased with his own performances, He sends away sorrowful, and proved to his own conviction, and to the conviction of all succeeding generations, that he did not keep the commandments as he thought he had. By going away sorrowful he showed that he loved his possessions better than his God, and that he had not yet kept the first command, much less all the commandments.

But our Lord observed another kind of language to the penitent that saw his sin and was condemned by the law—"Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," is His language to such.

He observed, likewise, a different conduct with respect to those who had a strong and a weak faith. The one gets an answer all at once; the other is made to wait and his faith put to the trial. In the portion of Scripture just now read we have the history of the woman of Canaan, from the 21st verse to the 28th—the accomplishment of the prophecy in Isaiah 35th chapter, in verses 29, 30, 31, and the miracle of the loaves from verse 32 to verse 39.

I shall speak to each of these points, and conclude with some practical inferences. And we have here—

First—The history of the woman of Canaan, where we may observe—

What she was;

The reception she met with from our Lord;

The trial and victory of her faith.

First—What she was.

Scripture says expressly that she was a Syrophenician, and, therefore, by birth a Gentile. She was an alien to the

commonwealth of Israel, had no right to the covenant of Abraham, and was excluded from the privileges of the people of God. Great were the privileges of the ancient people of God, as ours are also who have succeeded them. The Apostle mentions their privileges—they had the oracles of God; they had the promises; they had symbols of the Divine presence among them. From all these the poor Gentiles were excluded, and lived without God in the world. And as they lived without God, they were without the ordinary means of salvation. As they had no access to the means of grace, they could not hear the joyful sound, or any accounts of the great Messiah, who was to save His people from their sins. This was the condition of the generality of the heathen world. History, however, informs us that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were translated into the Greek language, and no doubt this paved the way for the Gospel. Christ is called the desire of all nations, and there was a general belief among mankind that some great Personage would appear at the time that our Saviour was born and some time thereafter. And they could learn this only from the writings of the prophets. And there is a strong probability that the nation bordering upon Palestine must have known something more of the true God than those who lived at a greater distance. And this opinion is confirmed by the history of this woman. Though a Gentile by birth, she knew the doctrine of salvation, and applied personally to the Messiah Himself for a cure to her sick daughter. Her faith is extolled by the Head of the Church Himself. She was like some in our day who, having occasional access to the Gospel, embrace the call and obtain salvation to their souls; whereas those who constantly hear it, like the Jews of old, reject the great salvation, and thus perish in their sins.

Again, we have here the reception she met with from our Lord.

The poor woman had her daughter at home grievously tormented by a devil. She had heard about the great Prophet that appeared among the people of Israel, and of the wonderful and astonishing cures that had been performed by Him. As she seems to have known the history of the Jews, for she called our Lord the Son of David, it was natural for her to think that, as Elisha had cured Naaman the Syrian, a man of another nation, that Christ would cure her daughter. Full of these thoughts, with the deepest humility, she came to our Saviour and set forth her piteous case. Instead of a gracious answer, He continues silent. It would appear, by comparing Matthew and Mark, that He gave her no answer in the house. She came after and followed Him. He does not say a word. "Merciful Saviour, how mysterious are Thy dealings with Thy people,"

she cries after Him. "Have mercy upon me, thou Son of David." The disciples interpose and plead for her. The answer they obtain is that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As a preacher and worker of miracles this was the case, though not as a Saviour. And thus by partly concealing, partly revealing the truth, he exercised her faith. It was a great trial to her to hear that He was sent to the house of Israel, and this seemed to cut off all her hopes, for the words were said in her hearing and before the people. Though she meets with a repulse, yet she would not be put back. She came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." The answer she gets, one would think, would have reduced her to absolute despair. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." But observe in her answer and behaviour—

The nature, the power, and the victory of faith.

"Truth, Lord," said she, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She observed that the dogs under the table ate of the children's crumbs. She acknowledges the truth of our Lord's observation, and from His very words makes an argument to carry her point. She pleads kindness, and insists that the dog is an animal belonging to the family, and therefore entitled to the crumbs. The compassionate Saviour, no longer able, as it were, to resist the faith His own Spirit had raised, told her that her faith was great, and instantly granted her request.

And here we may observe that this is always the nature of faith. It makes an argument of everything which sense and reason and the dark appearances of providence would raise against it in order to carry its point. It hopes against hope, and sees the kind hand of God in the darkest dispensations. The event makes it appear that this woman was in reality a child, though she acknowledged herself to be a dog. And every child of God may do the same when he considers how the poison of sin has infected his nature and all his actions. But there is something in him that follows the Saviour notwithstanding. And this principle of faith keeps the people of God in the way of duty, and put a favourable construction upon all that the Lord does. They see something bright behind a dark providence, and at last they obtain deliverance. In the pillar of fire and cloud there was a dark side to the Egyptian, and a bright side to the Israelites, and it was the same pillar. Afflictions, troubles and crosses are dark dispensations. But in the midst of judgments faith sees mercy. And, in fact, there is mercy in the sharpest troubles, and it is our misery that we receive them with rebellious hearts. When

we do so we draw down more troubles upon our own heads. The Israelites are brought to the wilderness. By their murmurs, discontent, and rebellion, they bring down judgments, and at last provoke God, so that none of that wicked generation see Canaan except a few individuals that were resigned to the will of God. The way to remove an affliction is to submit to the Divine will, and if the troubles continue long, the way to convert the poison into a wholesome medicine is to receive the stroke with meekness, humility and resignation.

Contrast to her—Ahaz—Scribes seeking a sign—Herod—a miracle.

This good woman had a grievous affliction, a devil possessing her daughter. The appearance of providence would tell her that her affliction was likely to continue while she lived. Faith submits, waits upon the Saviour, and obtains a cure. Job—Joseph—Temporal prosperity—Ahaz.

The patriarch Joseph and that miracle of patience and resignation, the holy Job, had their great share of the afflictions of this life. By receiving them with humility and submission to the will of God their faith rises triumphant at last. They obtain temporal prosperity, and their latter end is better than their beginning. Their souls also made great improvement in the virtues and graces of the spiritual life. They proved in every sense of the word the truth of that Divine promise that they will not be put to shame who wait upon Him. Sin is the cause of trouble, and God is the best Judge what particular kinds of afflictions and troubles are most calculated to heal our perverse spirits, and lead us to our duty. People are generally crossed in their darling lust and favourite pursuit. Is it not natural to suppose that as Jacob, David, and others have got their sharpest trials from their idols, that this good woman might have made an idol of her daughter? When she saw her possessed, her unbelief might have raised awful apprehensions. And had not her unbelief great advantage when she heard the Saviour Himself say, "It is not meet to give the children's bread to dogs." She must have felt the force of the expression, as the Jews were wont to call the Gentiles by this name. She acknowledges the charge, and yet faith makes use of the very charge to plead kindness at the hands of the Saviour.

What a contrast to the faith of the people of God is Ahaz, the rebellious King of Judah, who refused a sign from heaven, and continued obstinate notwithstanding all the troubles sent to reform him! His rebellion and unbelief have fixed a stigma upon his memory that will continue while the Old Testament is read in the Church.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, who asked a sign from heaven, as well as the impious Herod, who wished to see a miracle, form likewise a contrast to the humble faith of the people of God.

Our Lord never yet refused any person who came in earnest to ask His assistance. But the proud and presumptuous are always sent empty away.

And it should be our business, as man is born to trouble, to examine how we improve them. Do they lead us, like the woman of Canaan, to the Saviour, and do they empty us of sin and self? Do we come to the Saviour in the spirit of the poor publican and the woman of Canaan, or do we ask the removal of them with the self-conceited spirit of the proud Pharisee? Are we at the foot of the cross waiting for our answer, or are we like the wicked King of Israel, who proudly said, "Why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?" The woman of Canaan did not go away in a pet because she was called a dog, but humbly and meekly acknowledged the charge, and still continues her suit, and obtained her request at last when every appearance was against her.

The other part of the lecture is the accomplishment of the 35th Chapter of Isaiah, in verses 29, 30, 31. In the 29th verse we find that our Lord went up to a mountain.

A mountain is a fit place for prayer and meditation. A person is then retired from the world, and has his thoughts collected and his mind upon heaven. There is a grand view of the works of creation, and the sight will raise the soul to God. If Moses went up to the top of Nebo to get a view of the holy land, is it a surprise that a greater than Moses should occasionally retire from the multitude and go up to a mountain to pray and hold communion with heaven. The people sometimes thought of making Him a king, but, O, what a mere trifle did an earthly kingdom appear to His large and comprehensive mind. He had a view to the recompence of reward and to the Kingdom that was waiting for Him. The sweet savour of His heavenly doctrine and the fame of His miracles made even the multitude to follow Him hither.

Verses 30, 31—"They had with them the blind, the lame, and the maimed, and many others, and they cast them at Jesus' feet, and He healed them."

Did ever King in the triumph of his conquest bestow upon his poor subjects gifts like these? The blind see, and the lame walk, and the sick are returning in health. And should not the example of this great multitude be followed by the multitude of the people of God in every age and in every place? Though we are not to expect miracles, we may always

look for answers to prayer and spiritual cures. They threw the blind, and the deaf, and the maimed at the feet of Jesus, and He healed them. We do not read that He refused to heal any of them, and there were many. This is surely a lesson to us. How many blind and lame sinners are among us? Do we in reality throw them at Christ's feet? If we do not, do we not certainly fail in our duty? Can we say that the Saviour, who did not refuse to cure bodily distempers, would fail to cure spiritual diseases if we applied to Him? Is not a spirit of grace and supplication among the people of God always accompanied with an answer?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is a compassionate Saviour, and if we acted the part to dead sinners that Lazarus' sisters acted to their brother we would see the happy effects.

When the multitude saw the astonishing miracles that were performed upon numbers of poor objects, they glorified the God of Israel. And we have the same cause they had, for miracles are one of the great proofs of the truth of the Gospel and the Divinity of our Saviour. But the great miracle which will make us effectually to believe is His almighty power exerted in converting and sanctifying our own souls. And when sinners are converted from the evil of their ways they will then see cause to glorify God, and with grateful hearts to acknowledge His mercy in delivering their souls. The faith of the people is further strengthened by being witnesses of another miracle which He wrought to feed their bodies. In the 32nd verse we read that our Lord had called His disciples and informed them that he was touched with compassion for the multitude that had continued with Him so long, and had nothing to eat—that He would not send them away fasting, lest they should faint by the way.

The answer of the disciples argues a wonderful weakness of faith. They had already seen so many specimens of His power in the works He had already wrought that one would think they would naturally look for some exertion of His power when He had given but the smallest hint of His unwillingness to send them away fasting.

We wonder at the unbelief of the Israelites in the desert, and that of the apostles, who were so long in the company of our Lord. St Mark 6th, verse 52, assigns as the cause the hardness of their hearts. And if we examine ourselves, the cause of our not believing the Gospel is the hardness of our own hearts. Our Lord asked them how many loaves they had. And when they informed Him there were seven loaves and a few small fishes, He made the multitude to sit upon the ground. Upon this he took the loaves and the

fishes, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to be distributed to the people.

And here we may observe the wisdom, as well as the compassion, of our Lord. He used means in His condescension to the weakness of His faithful followers. Though He could create food to satisfy their hunger, He gives the blessing to the loaves. They increase by distributing them. He took the loaves and blessed them. And if we put our loaves, let them be never so few, in His hand, He can and He will bless them. When they are increased by Him there is a blessing in them. But if we increase them ourselves, they are in danger of leaving a curse.

And we may take notice as we pass along that no person will lose by following the Saviour and doing His will. He supports them though it were by a miracle. In verses 37, 38, 39, we see that the whole multitude did eat and were satisfied, and left more than was set before them. And when the people were satisfied with food, He dismissed them, took shipping Himself, and went to the coasts of Magdala.

He was unwearied in well-doing, and when He preached, wrought miracles, and did good in one place, He then went to another. And all the works of our Saviour were purely with a view to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

I shall conclude this lecture with some practical inferences—

First, there is encouragement here for those poor souls who seem in their own view to be excluded, who meet with deep silence from the throne, and have their prayer shut out like Jonah and Jeremiah. Let such wait, hope and plead, and not take delay for a refusal. The Lord's time is best, and though He afflicts, He will surely return and have mercy, speak peace, and give a gracious answer. Every man has something peculiar in his own case. But let him entertain kind hopes of the Saviour.

Secondly—Let such as have burdens of any kind throw them at the feet of the Saviour. Whether we plead for ourselves or for others, let us go with our complaints to Christ. There is encouragement for the people of God, not only to pray for themselves, but likewise for others. They cast the blind and the lame at Christ's feet and He healed them.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xvi. 1-19

By reading and hearing the history of our Lord Jesus Christ we may discover the malignity of that spiritual disease under which we labour, and the exceeding preciousness of our cure. If we wish to find out the poison that lurks in the human heart, and if we are desirous to be acquainted with the human character, let us read the Gospel. Sin at its lowest stage is opposition to the will of God, and sin at its height is enmity to God and to everything that is good. We have a common expression among us, that is, when we speak of a perfect character. If such a person should appear among us, whatever our opinion of ourselves may be, we would not love him. The only perfect character that ever appeared on earth among mankind was hated and despised by men. Never man had so many enemies as our Saviour, never system had so many opponents as His Gospel. That the doctrine is heavenly and the morality is pure will be acknowledged by all that examine it, our enemies themselves being judges. Whence, then, had our Saviour so many enemies, and why does His Gospel still meet with such a cold reception among us? The cause is clear: they love sin better than the Saviour.

I shall endeavour to explain the words in the order in which they be, and conclude with practical inferences.

Verse 1.—“The Pharisees also with the Sadducees, came, and, tempting, desired Him that He should show them a sign from Heaven.”

The Pharisees and Sadducees in some points were diametrically opposite in their sentiments. But they both agree in one great opinion—their opposition to Christ. Herod and Pontius Pilate had enmity among themselves, but they became friends when Christ was to be condemned. And we may observe similar cases in this our day. There are people of various opinions in point of religion, and we may easily observe that they associate with, and have greater pleasure in the company of, libertines and infidels than in the society of pious people. Whatever set of opinions people may embrace, whatever Church they belong to, they join in one great opinion, they

study to please themselves and not the Lord Jesus Christ. They oppose strict godliness, and persecute those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

The Pharisees and Sadducees unite in tempting Christ by asking Him for a sign from Heaven. Not satisfied with the many and irrefragable proofs that He gave of His being the Messiah, they ask some sign from Heaven to gratify a sinful and petulant curiosity. Had they done justice to their own consciences they might remember the story of the shepherds, the history of the wise men from the East, and the public baptism at Jordan. He was there acknowledged by a voice from heaven as the Son of God, in whom He was well pleased. Our Lord knew well they were steeled with prejudice, and were resolved to refuse conviction, otherwise His astonishing works might make them acknowledge the truth. Miracles and signs from heaven would be equally lost upon them, and therefore He refused their request.

Verses 2, 3, 4.—“He answered and said unto them, When it is evening ye say it will be fair weather, for the sky is red : and in the morning it will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites ! ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times ? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given unto it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas. And He left them and departed.”

It is well known to any that choose to read and study the Gospel with candour and impartiality that our Lord never refused His assistance to any that stood in need and made application. It is likewise a fact that when any person wishing to come at the truth made enquiry whether He was the promised Messiah, He gave such all the satisfaction He could naturally expect. John Baptist sent persons to ask if He was He who was to come. The answer our Lord made was an appeal to the glorious miracles He wrought as a proof of His Divine mission and Divine unction. It was by giving a proof of His omniscience that He convinced Nathaniel that He was the Son of God. But when His bitter and avowed enemies, with malignant intention, called for a sign from Heaven, He absolutely refused their request. And at the same time showed them how inexcusable they were as to their affected ignorance of His being the true Messiah.

In Palestine, as well as in all other countries, many persons can prognosticate the weather from the appearance of the skies in the morning or evening. He blames them for their knowledge in natural things and their criminal indifference to things of infinite consequence to their souls. They were at

no pains to discern the signs of the times. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were in their hands, and they might know the time of the Messiah's appearance. Daniel's seventy weeks were nearly run out, the sceptre was fast departing from Judah, for they were under the power of the Romans. A wonderful person had appeared among them, for both the purity of His life and the glory of His works and miracles. He was known to be of the tribe of Judah and the family of David. In a word, all the character of Messiah centred in our Lord Jesus Christ. And as they might know this if they did justice to the Word of God and to their own consciences, He referred them to the sign of the Prophet Jonas and then left them. Jonah was three days and three nights in the heart of the sea, and thus was a type of the Saviour. Our Lord, by this answer, referred them to His resurrection as the last proof of His being the Messiah. Wicked and adulterous, therefore, as that generation were, they were to get an offer of salvation after His resurrection, and if this would not convince them, they were to be left as a prey to their incorrigible lusts and passions and the hardness and deplorable obstinacy of their own hearts. Every method was tried to convince them; when all failed they were at last cast off. And it is to be feared that we are like the Pharisees and Sadducees in this respect. They were acute enough in discerning the face of the sky, but blind like moles in the things of God. And have we not many among us who show themselves to be men of prudence and good sense in managing worldly affairs, who are mere fools in the things of God. They have penetration enough to see and discern what makes for their temporal interest; but, alas, they allow their souls to lie uncultivated like the sluggards' gardens. Ministers of the Gospel use every mean they can think of to better their spiritual condition; but, instead of growing better, they become worse, and very often are more wicked and greater sinners than those that never heard the joyful sound. They come like the Jews to hear our Saviour, not with a view to get good to their souls, but that they may afterwards contradict and blaspheme what they hear, and thus accumulate guilt and damnation upon their own souls. They are convinced in their own consciences that what they hear is the truth. With regard to such we may well ask the Saviour's question, "How can they escape the damnation of hell?"

Verses 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.—"And when His disciples were come to the other side they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus saith unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, it is because we have taken no bread.

Which, when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not unto you concerning bread that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then they understood how that He bade them not to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

In these words we find that our Lord gave a caution to His disciples to avoid false doctrine. It is true He observes in another place that the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' chair, and He recommends them to follow what was wholesome in what they heard. As far as they followed the doctrine of Moses they were to follow them. But here he bids them beware of what was false and poisonous in the doctrine of Pharisees and Sadducees.

From this advice of our Saviour we see of what consequence it is to the comfort and happiness of our souls to hear fat and wholesome doctrine. The Apostles were very anxious about the doctrines the people heard. And this absolutely condemns that senseless and foolish observation often made by the common people that if they made good use of the worst doctrine they hear they would be safe. This is not true, for they may hear what will prove poison instead of food or medicine to their souls. The observation proceeds from their insensibility of conscience and mere indifference about the state of their souls. All doctrines are much the same to them while they continue in that state. They would not, however, talk in this luke-warm style in drawing a comparison between different kinds of foods or of liquors. They will not say that if a man makes good use of the worst kind of bread and a scant measure of the same, and of the weakest liquor, that he is rendered as strong for bodily labour as the man that gets great food or plenty of good food and refreshing liquors. The cause is, they have tasted bodily food, but they are strangers hitherto to what will feed and invigorate, comfort and strengthen their souls. And our Lord here justly blames the weakness of His disciples' faith. They gave a wrong turn to His words; not, indeed, from malignity, but from simplicity and ignorance. Our Lord shows them, by putting them in mind of the miracles He wrought that He could still feed them in the same way if there was necessity. They clearly perceived by this that he pointed at the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And here we may observe that friends, as well as enemies, sometimes give a wrong turn to the expressions of our Saviour. Our Lord, however, knew the heart, and made a great distinction between weakness of intellect and corruption of heart. The people of God in some cases may have sinful prejudices in smaller matters, but they are sins of ignorance. But our Lord did not nurse them in sins of ignorance or in any errors. But when He rebukes them He has different language from what He uses to His implacable enemies. He did not encourage the errors of His friends, and He thus showed Himself the great Friend of their souls. And the people of God should cheerfully submit to every rebuke that is calculated for the spiritual and everlasting good of their souls.

Verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19.—“When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in Heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.”

Our Lord was constantly going about doing good. We read in the former chapter that He was in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and here we find Him in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi. The one is supposed to be a day's journey from the other.

It is true our Lord was the minister of the circumcision, and as a preacher was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but we see that He came to the borders of the heathen, as if He meant to show them that He was a light to enlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of His people Israel. The time of the calling of the Gentiles was not fully come till after His resurrection, and, therefore, He did not preach personally to them. But we find He gave them an opportunity of hearing Him and seeing His miracles, and thus prepared them for the preaching of His Apostles afterwards.

Upon this occasion our Lord asked His disciples what was the opinion of the multitude concerning Him. He did this not

from any desire of vainglory or to gain the good opinion of the people, but merely to instruct His disciples in the truth concerning the promised Messiah.

The disciples told Him that some looked upon Him to be Elias, others as Jeremiah, or, at any rate, as one of the old Prophets. When He asked their own opinion, Peter made a glorious confession of his faith—He answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Our Lord, as a reward for his faith, pronounced him happy in having this mystery revealed to him by the Spirit, and told He would build His Church upon that Rock whom Peter had acknowledged for the Rock of his salvation, and that the powers of darkness would never prevail against it. At the same time He promised to make Peter one of the principal pillars in His Church, and gave him the keys of discipline as well as doctrine, as He afterwards gave to all the Apostles.

Now, in these words we may observe the following doctrines :—

First, the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the necessity of Divine light and grace to see this truth.

Thirdly, that the Gospel shall prevail against the powers of darkness.

Lastly, the privileges of the Church and ministers of the Gospel.

Of these great truths we shall speak a few things as they be in order. From these words we see—

1. The Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter calls Him Christ, the Son of the living God. As the Son of Man naturally signifies a man, in like manner the Son of God signifies one that has all the essential properties of the Divine nature. Good men and angels are called the sons of God, but it is not said that the fullness of the Godhead ever dwelt in one of them. But when the Son whose throne is from everlasting is introduced into the world, all creatures are desired to worship Him. We are to kiss the Son in token of honour, and homage, and subjection. And this subjection and worship can only be given to the Divine nature. The Divine nature in our Lord received worship from His creatures. It is according to the Divine nature that He uses that remarkable expression, "And now, O Father, glorify Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." But again—

2. The necessity of Divine light and grace to see this truth.

No man can come unto the Son except the Father draw him. Others as well as Peter had access to hear His doctrine and witness His miracles, but without effect. Thousands had heard His precious Gospel and saw His works. But instead of believing on Him, they rejected Him as the Messiah, and the Rock of Salvation became to many a Rock of offence. And this shows us the necessity of prayer for Divine influences. (Mark vii. 7; Luke xxii. 13).

3. That the Gospel shall prevail against the powers of darkness.

And this will naturally happen because the Church is built upon a rock. The waves may dash themselves to pieces against the rock, but they will not prevail. All the enemies of God shall be put to confusion, and their fury shall fall at last upon themselves. And this may appear—

(1). From the nature of the Gospel.

It is a system of purity and calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of man. And as this is the end the Gospel has in view, it must ultimately prevail. God will support His own glory, and punish all that persevere to the end in opposing Him. His honour binds Him to keep the Gospel in the world.

(2). But again we may reason from what has happened.

The corruption of human nature has given it all the opposition possible from the beginning. Every art that the malice of hell, the strength of lust and the power of the sword could make use of were employed to subvert it, and it still subsists. And from what has passed we may reason as to what is future. The sun rose every day for 1000 years past; we may reason that it will rise also to-morrow. And people would show as much wisdom in arresting the sun and endeavouring to hinder his rising as oppose the power of God in the progress of the Gospel. It did and it will prevail in every place where the spirit of God is determined to exert His power.

If God has determined that the Gospel will be in a place, it will be sent there. It may leave one spot of the earth and go to another, but God will have a Church always to the end of the world. And let it be observed that this remark regards the operation of the Spirit accompanying the Gospel, and not the mere outward establishment of Christianity. The one may be destroyed in a place; the other never can. The Church may be ambulatory in the wilderness, but it is always somewhere or other protected by the pillar of fire and cloud. Every opposition from enemies of all kinds serve only to illustrate and establish the Gospel.

(3). And this appears from the several promises of the Word.

We have a sure word of revelation. All the promises centre in Christ. They must be accomplished, for His Word cannot fall to the ground. There are various promises respecting the Gospel both in the Old and New Testaments. And God is faithful in accomplishing His promises. We see His predictions literally performed in things of less consequence. And in fact the enemies of the Gospel, contrary to their own intention, shall be found instrumental in accomplishing Divine promises and exalting the Saviour.

4. Lastly, we see the privileges of the Church and the ministers of the Gospel.

The privileges of the Church are great, and this is not the proper place to explain them. We shall only observe that all the privileges of the ministers of the Gospel are given them in behalf of the Church. What ministers, therefore, do in doctrine and discipline is for the edification and good of the Church, and to promote their salvation. What they bind or loose on earth is bound or loosed in heaven. When we authoritatively pronounce pardon of sin to the penitent, that is bound in heaven. The penitent is loosed in heaven, and he often feels the comfort upon earth. And if a wicked person is incorrigible and is delivered to Satan he shall find to his cost that this is bound in heaven also, and if he does not repent the sentence of the Church shall be executed by the sentence of judgment. How awful, then, is excommunication when it is pronounced against wicked and obstinate sinners. And it is your duty, my friends, to pray that sinners may be awakened to see the danger of their ways.

We read in the 20th verse that He charged His disciples that they should tell no man that He was Jesus the Christ.

The time of His sufferings were now drawing very near, and as His Apostles were established in the truth of His Divinity, He enjoined them at this time to conceal it. And there was good cause to do so for some short time. The faith of the Apostles themselves had enough to do while He lay in the grave. The time for preaching this great truth was after His resurrection from the dead, when He was declared to be the Son of God with power. The resurrection, then, is the great proof of His Divinity, and of the truth of the Gospel.

Having thus explained the words, I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

First, if the Jews were guilty of criminal neglect in discerning the signs of the times, let us beware that we be not guilty of the same kind of neglect. There are signs of good

weather and of bad weather, signs that precede the summer, and others that indicate the approach of winter. There are signs that may attend individuals and communities. If an individual lives in sin and neglects the Gospel and abuses golden opportunities of promoting his salvation, he carries about with him the signs of his own future misery. If he believes the Gospel and forsakes sin, he has a presage of his future and everlasting happiness.

And with regard to communities, if there are great sins among them, as this is a reproach to any people, these are signs of their approaching dissolution. The long-suffering of God and the prayers of His people, like good and wholesome medicines, may prevent death, as it were, for some little time. But the disease may become too inveterate for a radical cure. Dissolution must, therefore, ensue. Great sins destroyed the Empires of the Persians, Greeks and Romans. And the sins of Christians are still greater, and must bring greater judgments.

On the other hand, if we saw a spirit of prayer poured out upon all ranks in Church and State—if we saw private and public prayer diets, and that virtue, honesty, purity, and all the Christian graces did prevail among us, these would infallibly prognosticate temporal and spiritual prosperity. And we may appeal to your own consciences which of these signs do you see among us.

Secondly. That good and wholesome doctrine is of the utmost consequence to people. The Apostles stood in need of the caution they got; much more do we. And if people do not make good use of the doctrines they hear, God may permit poison to be mixed with their food. Good doctrine is your mercy, if you improve it—if not, it must prove your greater condemnation to hear it.

Lastly. We see how glorious are the privileges of the Church of Christ and the ministers of the Gospel. The Church is secured from all the powers of darkness. If a man remains, therefore, in the Church, and is a true member of Christ, he is safe. Ministers have great privileges—What they do is bound in heaven. The ambassador of an earthly Sovereign, who represents his master, can propose terms of peace or war. To show you the nature of discipline, suppose a man from the camp of Israel had been excluded from the people of God, and had gone over to the Egyptians the night the two armies passed through the Red Sea, what would be the consequences? Death, undoubtedly, to the miserable man. How fearful is the death-bed of an excommunicated person! You know when we baptise a child, we pray to confirm in heaven what

was done upon earth. And if people do not forfeit it, there is a blessing promised. In like manner, when we excommunicate, we deliver a man over to Satan. And we have power to do the one as well as the other.

What wretches must they be who can talk lightly about such an awful ordinance! How awful, then, is the excommunication pronounced against the wicked! "Depart from Me, ye cursed."

May God keep you from knowing what it means, and bless His Word to your souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

‘ On MATTHEW xvi. 21 to End

AFTER our Lord had nearly finished His course of obedience, He now prepares Himself for the course of suffering He had to undergo. As the Great Captain of our salvation, He was to be perfect through suffering, and thus open the door of Heaven to those who believe and obey Him. He had prepared His Apostles by His Heavenly discourses to hear this doctrine, and it was necessary that they should be instructed in the doctrines of His sufferings, as this was the great end of His coming into the world.

His disciples were tinctured with the false notions which the Jews entertained of the earthly kingdom of Messiah. It was, therefore, by degrees that our Lord opened up the leading doctrines of Christianity and the great mystery of our redemption.

He now informs them of this great truth in plain terms, and tells them that this was the design of His journey to Jerusalem.

I shall by Divine aid explain the words, and make some practical inferences.

Verse 21.—“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

In these words our Lord shows Himself to be great, and the Good Shepherd that was to lay down His life for the sheep. He was now called by His Father to drink the bitter cup, and, instead of declining to do so, He cheerfully met His sufferings. He saw the storm that was coming, and met it with firmness and courage. And as His sufferings would likewise prove a great trial to His disciples, He prepares them likewise, that they may not come upon them unawares. The sufferings of our Lord were to be very great, for He was to undergo a public trial, and be condemned and crucified. And this trial was to be carried on by the principal characters in the nation—the chief priests, elders, and scribes. But though He was to suffer death, He was to rise again on the third day.

He was an innocent person, but He was to suffer for the sins of others. And as He suffered unjustly, for His judge acknowledged His innocence, God raised Him from the dead. And this He informs His disciples of, to comfort them in view of His approaching death. It was necessary that our Lord should suffer for the glory of God. The truth, and the accomplishment of prophecy, and the salvation of men required this. But at the time He mentions His death, He also informs them of His resurrection, so that they might rest assured that the one event would happen infallibly as well as the other.

Verse 22.—“And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be to Thee.”

From these words we may make the following remarkable observations:—

First—The inconsistency of human nature.

Secondly—That Peter himself could not be the Rock upon which our Lord was to build His Church.

Thirdly—That it concerns the best of us to examine what spirit we are of.

First, the inconsistency of human nature. Peter, a little while ago, had made a most glorious confession that our Lord was the true Christ, the Son of the living God. He was then in the Spirit, and full of heavenly love to His Saviour. We see him now in a very carnal frame. He yields to the suggestions of carnal wisdom, self-conceit, and foolish pride. If Christ was the Son of God, how could he take upon him to contradict or advise Him? If He was the wisdom of the Father, the Way, the Truth and the Life, could he possibly be mistaken himself or mislead others? And yet the holy and blessed Apostle is guilty of this fault. Even the great Elijah fails in his courage, and the meek Moses is angry. And if such tall cedars fell, Lord, what is man? Weakness and folly—may Thy grace be sufficient for us. And is this the case with us all? At times we think ourselves in a heavenly frame, and what would we not do for Christ and His cause; at other times we are in a languid, carnal, and earthly frame, unfit and indisposed for any duty. Upon some occasions we think we have got the victory, but, anon, we cry, like the Apostle, “O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death?” We are oppressed with lust, pride, or passion, or some other carnal affection.

We have no cause to boast, and this may teach us our weakness, and that we must depend upon free grace and the great and all-sufficient Saviour.

2. Peter could not be the Rock upon which our Lord was to build His Church.

It is true our Lord says to him, "Thou art Peter," and in allusion to his name, He says, "I will build my Church upon this Rock." And does He not say to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it again?" He does not mean the temple of Jerusalem in the one case more than he means the Rock of Peter's faith in the other. Peter had strong faith, but he was permitted to fall into blunders and sins to show he was fallible, and that he could not possibly be the Rock upon which the Church was built.

In the next verse our Lord calls him Satan, and if he fell himself, how could he be the Rock that supported others? There is, besides, another glaring absurdity in the supposition. If Peter was the Rock upon which the Church was built, we may well ask, what was Christ Himself? If Peter was the Rock, then Christ must build upon Peter, and not Peter upon Christ, and if this is not an absurdity, what is so? The bare mention of it is enough to confute the sentiment. If it be asked, then—And what is here promised to Peter? A great deal indeed.

(1.) His salvation is here secured, for he built his hope upon a Rock. Satan could not prevail finally against him—though he fell, he rose again.

(2.) Again, he is here constituted one of the principal pillars of the Church of Christ, and one of the great Instruments that procured the salvation of men.

3. That it concerns the best of us to consider what spirit we are of.

Peter might think that he spoke from affection to Christ, but the event makes it clear that he was warped with carnal prejudices and worldly motives, for if he was right in his opinions and had the glory of God in view, he had not been rebuked. Two of the Apostles wished to bring fire from heaven. Another complains that a person who did not follow them had cast out devils in the name of Christ. No doubt they might think their motives were pure, but there was something wrong lurking under all this seeming zeal. And if the Apostles were wrong, are we not at least in equal, if not greater, danger? Lord, direct all our steps.

Verse 23.—"But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, satan; thou art an offence unto Me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

When Peter got such a rebuke, couched in terms so very severe, we may well conclude that there was something awful

in his advice, and that he was certainly guilty of a very great crime. Our Lord was not subject to unguarded sallies of passion, for He was free from all sin. He could not be mistaken in what He said, for He was the wisdom of God, and, therefore, infallible in all His doctrines and rebukes. And what was Peter's sin?

1. He wished to divert our Lord either by worldly motives or slavish fear from the great work He had undertaken.

2. He opposed the glory of God in the salvation of men.

3. His advice would overthrow all the leading Promises in the Old Testament.

All this being true, our Lord turned to him, and told him that he acted the part of an adversary to Him, and that instead of seeking to promote the glory of God, he gave Him the greatest opposition. He was actuated by motives of ambition and pride, and wished to carry on an interest contrary to the interest of God in the world. Had the Saviour flinched from the work He undertook, hell might triumph and the pillars of heaven would fall. Eternal truth would fail, and God Almighty be disappointed of the end He had in view.

It is true, Peter swerved through ignorance and folly, not knowing the import of his own advice. But as his advice was so diametrically opposite to God and the salvation of His people, the Saviour rebuked him as he deserved. He showed him his danger, and it would appear the good man did not proceed further. He saw his folly in the proper light, and that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men.

Verses 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.—“Then Jesus said unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.”

After our Lord had given this sharp rebuke to his favourite and Apostle, He comes to lay down some general doctrines respecting not only His immediate followers, but also all His followers to the end of the world. For though the first Christians were more exposed to persecution on account of religion than we are, the spirit of the doctrine is the same. It concerns us as much as it did them.

The first doctrine our Lord lays down here is self-denial for all His followers.

Second, is to take up the cross.

Third, is to suffer persecution to death rather than deny our religion.

The argument He uses is the danger, on the one hand, and the great Reward on the other. And then informs them that some of those who heard Him would not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.

I shall speak to each of these doctrines.

First, our Lord lays down self-denial for all His followers. Since the fall of Adam, the human will is in direct opposition to the will of God. Sin has spread over all the powers of the soul, so that a state of spiritual discipline and regimen is absolutely necessary. And we are averse from suffering of any kind. A gracious God appoints suffering of one kind or other for our spiritual good. He begins with the lowest kind and ascends to the highest, according as our disease and the state of our hearts and conversation may require. We are to deny ourselves, because our will is corrupt and our desires sinful and contrary to the will of God. And even when lawful we may exceed. We are to deny our sinful self. And this is absolutely necessary for the life of our souls. Sin of every kind is spiritual poison. The gratification of our sinful passions is to the soul what strong food may be to the body in some dangerous diseases. A sick man will deny himself the pleasure of food and liquor which his appetite may crave, if his physician warns him there is danger in taking them. And no man in his senses will say that this self-denial is a cruelty to the patient. He denies himself that he may have the greater relish for food after he recovers his health. People in health deny themselves. If a man is invited to a feast to-morrow, he takes a light supper to-night, and a sober breakfast in the morning, that he may have the greater enjoyment of the feast to which he is invited. And if we would relish the rich feasts of the Gospel and prepare ourselves for the joys of heaven, we ought to avoid sinful joys, and taste moderately all lawful enjoyments, for fear we disqualify our own souls. Our Lord forbids us nothing but what our reason will justify. Children are required to use a great deal of what they must reckon self-denial and even hardship. Their strong appetites and perverse inclinations would urge them to do a thousand things of which they would afterwards be ashamed. What they would think a hardship when children, they see very proper when they become men and women, and they avoid these things cheerfully. Now, in our minority we are fond of our own will, but when

our souls are thoroughly sanctified, we see the great propriety of all the rules of self-denial laid down in the Word. What is chastity, temperance, and humility, but so many exercises of self-denial. And this self-denial may be painful, but when we get the victory and enter upon the joys of heaven, we would naturally avoid these things that religion forbids. We then see in a clear light the wisdom of our Heavenly Father and His goodness to our souls in giving us such a gracious command as self-denial. When we become men and women our stomachs would have an aversion to all the trash of which children are so fond. We are, then, to deny ourselves, and not to seek our own will. There is such malignity in sin that it poisons all our enjoyments. We covet what is forbidden, and convert our very food into poison. The great aim of the Christian is to bring his will to the will of God, and, like his Saviour, to say—"Not My will, but Thine, be done."

2. Again, we are to take up the cross.

It is a truth which Scripture and experience may teach us that man is born to trouble. Sin will bring sorrow, and as we are sinners we must suffer affliction of one kind or other. People must suffer whether they be Christians or not. There is something in every man's lot that he must consider as a cross. But the doctrine of the text is that we must take it up and follow Christ. Now, if we take it up cheerfully and willingly, it will prove a blessing and a medicine to our souls. The profession of a Christian, if he is truly such, will naturally expose him to trouble. If he follow Christ, he must have the cross. He will meet with opposition. The world, flesh, and devil meet him in his pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan, and, like the Amalekites in the wilderness, will give him battle till the sun sets.

Now, we are to bear all that comes in our way for the sake of Christ. Providence will lay the trial or the sufferings in our way that is best calculated for our spiritual good. We must not flinch or go back from our duty. As far as we do so we hurt our spiritual interest.

It was a cross to the Apostles to receive Christ as a mere spiritual King, when they were taught to look for a mere temporal Messiah. They were stumbled at the idea of His sufferings. When we seek our happiness in anything but the favour of God, trouble is graciously sent to buy us back to a right way of thinking. We are to take up the cross, submit to the will of Heaven, and follow the suffering Saviour. If suffering was necessary for Him, it must be doubly necessary for us also. Whether the cross is sent as we think by man or immediately by God Himself, we are to take it up. Joseph

and David had their crosses from men. They considered them as instruments submitted to the will of God, and thus got good to their souls. The good man Job justified God in the midst of all his trials and afflictions, and still retained his integrity. The primitive Christians bore all the troubles to which they were exposed for the sake of Christ with humility and resignation. They did not throw off the cross, because this would be denying their profession. We ought, then, to bear the cross, and go with our burden after the Saviour, for He will, sooner or later, loose every burden. Only let us wait His time.

3. We are to suffer persecution to death, rather than deny our religion.

This is no doubt an awful trial, but should it ever happen to us, God would be seen to be infinitely wise and good in the trial. Should His providence bring us to the stake, He would do us no injury. He would, according to our need, give us grace sufficient for our suffering. And this will further appear when we consider that it is a Christian's duty to resign his life to God upon the bed of death. If God demands it, rather at the stake or gibbet, where is the great odds? Our future joy would be greater in the one case than in the other. If unbelief should tell us that we would faint and go back, or that we have no grace, and that we would lose the crown of Martyrdom, let us go with such thoughts to the Saviour, and if we have no grace, let us go as we are to the fountain of grace for strength in duty and assistance in every time of need. The Saviour is always a present help in time of trouble.

The argument He uses is the Danger on the one hand, and the great and unspeakable Reward on the other.

The Danger of Apostacy is great, and we should carefully avoid all approaches towards that great sin. Let us not sin against conscience, or indulge our own carnal appetites. Esau is an awful example to carnal Christians. Let drunkards, swearers, liars, and all other rotten professors consider this. The covetous worldling may here see for how much he would sell Christ and betray His cause.

On the other hand, the reward of constancy and perseverance is great. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard what joys await the true followers of Christ." The more we do and suffer for Him, the more glorious our reward. "In His presence is joy and at His right hand are pleasures ever more."

And after our Lord had delivered this useful doctrine, He informed them that some of those who were present would not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming into His Kingdom.

Now, it is a fact that several of his followers lived till the Christian religion had spread far and near, and the crucified Saviour was worshipped in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Some few of them lived till the destruction of Jerusalem, when He came to take signal vengeance of the Jewish nation for the horrible sin they were guilty of in crucifying the Lord of Glory. The destruction of Jerusalem was the great accomplishment of prophecy and the triumph of Christianity.

I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

1. The sufferings of Christ are one great proof that He was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. His sufferings are pointed out in the types, ceremonies, and prophecies. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. In spite of the Jews, sacrifices have ceased since the establishment of Christianity. As the great Sacrifice has been offered, it was not for the honour of God that His providence should suffer sacrifices to be offered, after proof had been given to Jews and Gentiles that Christ had offered a sacrifice for the sins of His people.

By the time Jerusalem was destroyed, Christianity had been sufficiently spread and published.

2. If we are the faithful followers of Christ, it is incumbent upon us to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices to God, and to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. He suffered for our sins and we ought to give up our lusts and sins to be nailed to His cross. And we are to do this willingly, for it is to be a reasonable service. Christ went willingly to death, and we must willingly part with sin. If our hearts, like the covetous young man in the Gospel, go away sorrowful from Christ, we are yet in our sins.

Christianity is a religion come from heaven, and, if we would enjoy the rewards of it let us live up to the spirit of it, let us follow our Divine Leader, and if we suffer, we shall rest with Him, high in salvation and the climes of bliss.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xvii. 1-9

As the sufferings of our Lord now drew very nigh, He saw proper to select three of His disciples, lead them to a mountain, and give them a view of His glory, and a foretaste of Heaven.

Without further preface, I shall, by Divine assistance, endeavour to throw some light on this delightful portion of sound writ, and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verses 1, 2.—“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.”

Our Lord chose three of His Apostles to be witnesses of His glorious transfiguration. Two or three witnesses are sufficient to attest any fact. And He was best Judge what three were the most proper for His purpose. To me it appears very probable that these three were more exposed to unbelief than any of the rest. Our Lord Himself said to one of them, “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee like wheat.” To satisfy their minds, therefore, He gave them a sight of His glory that the recollection of what they saw might keep up their hearts at the time of their greatest distress. The two Evangelists, Matthew and Luke, have a seeming difference, the one speaks of six days, the other about eight days. The one mentions the exact time, the other uses a round number, as we say, about eight days when we speak of the time between two Sabbaths, we include the two Sabbaths as well as the six intervening days. And let it be observed, that the difference between the sacred writers is rather seeming than real when examined. He brought them up into an high mountain apart. He did this to have the greater privacy and the more opportunity for heavenly contemplation. A mountain is a proper place for this purpose. Abraham went to a mountain to worship, and Moses, a little before his death, ascended the mountain of Nebo, and stood upon the top of Pisgah to get a view of the

Holy Land. Our Lord went often to a mountain to pray. A mountain is a very proper place for devotion. The view a person gets of the works of creation is calculated to raise the thoughts to heaven, that we may seek communion with the ever-present God. It is likely the mountain our Lord ascended at this time was Tabor, in Gallilee. It stands alone in a great plain, and the view from the top of it is inexpressibly beautiful. Here, then, it is thought, our Lord brought His disciples, and gave them the most glorious sight that could be seen this side of heaven. His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. St Luke observes that this happened when He was praying. And here we may observe that the greatest and most glorious actions of our Lord, the great Head of the Church, were accomplished by prayer. When He was baptised after prayer, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon Him like a dove. After prayer, He raised Lazarus from the dead, and after prayer He was transfigured on the mountain. And if we are followers of the Saviour, we shall obtain all our blessings, temporal and spiritual, in and through prayer. While He sojourned upon earth, His glory was eclipsed, and He passed for a poor man. But now he shows himself as something more than man. He discovers Himself as the Son of God and the brightness of His Father's glory.

Verses 3, 4.—“And behold, there appeared unto them, Moses and Elias, talking with Him. Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here — if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”

By comparing Luke and Matthew together, it would appear that this bright and glorious scene happened in the night. Peter and the other Apostles were heavy with sleep. And as this happened in the night it tended to make the scene still more glorious. Now, we cannot help observing that the Apostles, though valuable and good men, betrayed a great deal of human weakness. They did not watch with the Saviour, but fell asleep. He continued praying alone, though they did not join Him, for they were asleep. But their sloth did not provoke the Lord to withhold from them the glorious sight of His transfiguration. And here we may observe that He did everything alone. His disciples did not join in prayer when He was transfigured; they were asleep; “the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.” When they awoke, what a glorious sight! Did ever man since the creation of the world get such a midnight vision before? A light as bright as the sun enlightens the midnight gloom. When the Apostles awake they see the sight. The poor and humble Saviour

appears in His robes of glory. His face is like the sun, and His very garments bright as the light. And to add to their astonishment, they behold Moses and Elijah appear in glory likewise with the Saviour. It would appear the conversation continued for some time, for the Apostles knew when such exalted characters met together in such glory and majesty, what is the subject of their discourse? They do not talk of politics, the rise and fall of empires, and the great revolutions that happen in the kingdoms of this world. They have a much more sublime and heavenly subject. They talk about the Saviour's death and the redemption of mankind. If the glorious spirits who surround the throne of God descend to this inferior world, their conversation is suitable to their character. The angels talk of the birth of the Saviour and benefits that accrue to mankind by such a gift. If wise men of the world met together their discourse would not rise higher than the politics of the day, and the grandeur and riches of this earth. They would allow pious people to talk of the Gospel, as a subject beneath the notice of philosophers. We find, however, that the most exalted beings in the creation of God consider it as their honour and pleasure to talk about the Gospel. Exalted characters talk about exalted subjects, and would consider earthly conversation as the play of children, and entirely below their notice.

After Moses and Elijah had talked for some considerable time upon this glorious theme, they departed to heaven again. Peter, still willing to detain them, and wishing to prolong the conversation that pleased him so much, proposed to the Lord to make three tabernacles, one for Moses, and one for Elias, and one for Him. Scripture observes that he knew not what he said. He wished to prolong the heavenly vision; but this sight is too glorious for the earth: he could not triumph till he first fought the good fight of faith. And this is too much the case with us also. We are much fonder of the privileges and comforts than of the duties of religion. In our present state, however, the one are more for our happiness than the other. Comfort is reserved for the life to come. This is the field of battle, and we must be content with cordials now and then till we arrive at the paradise of God, and are called to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Instead of gratifying him in this particular, we read—

In verse 5, that—"While He yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased—hear ye Him."

Under the Old Testament dispensation the cloud was a symbol of the Divine Presence. The cloud appeared to

temper the glorious sight they saw, and, perhaps, to check their curiosity and prevent their attempting to pry too much into a subject that was too glorious and sublime for mortal eyes to see. When the cloud overshadowed them, they hear a voice from heaven, and what is the language of the heavenly Presence? The very language of the Gospel. And though God should this day speak by a Voice from heaven, He would not give a different advice from what is given already in the Gospel. The advice is to believe and obey the Saviour. God is always consistent with Himself, and the uniform language of the Old and New Testaments direct us to Christ as the salvation and hope of our souls. But though the Divine voice is full of mildness and grace, we find—

Verse 6.—“When the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were sore afraid.”

The voice of God is terrible to sinful men, and if a Mediator did not interpose, His voice would strike us down to hell. Though Christ was near them, there is something terrible to conscience when God speaks. And if His voice, speaking in mercy to His friends, frightens them, how awful will the voice of His justice be when He speaks to His enemies. Let us employ Christ. When God called after the first bold transgressor, “O Adam, where art thou?” it was no wonder though he ran off. Conscious guilt had made him afraid, and sin had blinded him so far as to hide himself from the All-seeing eye of heaven. The congregation at Sinai trembled when the law was given, but this is the less surprising, as the sight was so very terrible. But how shall we account for the terror the Apostles were in on the holy mount? They heard only the mild voice of the Gospel and the Mediator Himself was standing beside them. And yet we read they were sore afraid. This shows us that the best of men have cause to be afraid of God without a Mediator. They cannot depend on their own merits or performances. And wherever people ignorantly talk of the merits of human works while they are strangers to the corruptions of their own hearts, and the purity of the Divine nature and Divine law, when God begins to speak to them in terrible language in His providence or on the bed of death, they tremble through every nerve. And they have cause. And so had the Apostles, as they were sinners; nor could they get comfort till they were cheered and encouraged by the Saviour.

7.—“And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise and be not afraid.”

We find, then, that the voice of God speaking even to His people, is terrible. But the Redeemer, like the pillar of

cloud in the desert mitigating the great heat of the sun, interposes, stands between them and justice, bids them rise and not be afraid. If we take a view of God as described in Scripture, He is to be feared even in the congregation of the saints, and nothing can dissipate our fears or remove our doubts but a believing view of our great Intercessor as interposing in our behalf. And if people approach now to worship that God, who said to Moses and Joshua that the ground whereon He spoke to them was holy, have we not cause of fear? The disciples were afraid, and if we have no fear, that makes us apply to the Saviour when we come to worship in His house, it must arise from one of two causes—either that we had more grace than the Apostles had, or that we are blind and ignorant of our spiritual condition. If we have our fears and our doubts let us beg of Christ to touch us by the word of promise, and speak comfort to our souls.

Verses 8, 9.—“And when they lifted up their eyes,” etc.

Our Lord did not give them a longer continuance of the vision than they had strength to bear. Moses and Elijah were glorified spirits, and had bodies too bright to be fit companions for the Apostles but for a very short time. When they were left alone with the Lord, He bade them conceal the Vision till after His resurrection. I observed a little before, that to me it appeared probable that the three Apostles were the most exposed to unbelief. And this might consist very well with very strong faith. In the natural world the greatest tide is always followed with the lowest ebb. Now, there is great wisdom and goodness in the caution they got to conceal the Vision. Had the three Apostles, in the fulness of their hearts, revealed what they saw to His other followers, some of whom, no doubt, had but weak faith, the consequence might be very disagreeable. God never gives His people trials but such as they are able to bear, and it seems He saw they were not prepared to bear this. This Vision is concealed till after His resurrection, and the history of His resurrection and transfiguration, like two strong cordials given successively, revive their drooping hearts, and strengthen their faith against all future opposition.

I shall now conclude with some practical inferences.

First—There is such a thing now and then among the people of God as being brought up to the Mount.

When good Christians are humbled in the sight of God, the Holy Spirit may enlighten their minds, so as to make them believe and embrace the promises of the Gospel. When this happens their joy rises superior to the pleasure that corn and wine can give to the people of the world. If we are Christians

indeed we should beg of God to bring us to the Mount, and give us a sight by faith of the heavenly Canaan. The more we are confirmed in the doctrine of a future state the more our joy will abound. The pleasures of religion bring joy whether we look back or look forward. How poor are the joys of a worldling on the bed of death. Whereas the Christian looks back with pleasure, he looks forward with triumph.

2. If we have been in the Mount, it should be known by us in our life and conversation. When people return from a wedding or feast, the good company and good cheer, and exhilarating liquors, put them in a stew of good humour. They are agreeable to themselves and others. And if we have tasted the pleasures of religion they will surely make us better men and better neighbours and members of society. If people love the Lord Jesus Christ, we can tell the effect. He loved sinners, and we know the consequence. He gave proof of His love, and so will we also. We shall promote their temporal and spiritual interest. Such as are actuated by religion show their attachment to the Gospel. If grace opens the heart, it opens the purse, and cellar, and wardrobe, to our poor fellow-Christians. A mean or selfish, or a hard-hearted, or narrow-minded Christian is a contradiction in terms. If people love God they will love their brother also. And if they do not show this, they are mere strangers to religion, and have not yet been in the Mount with the Saviour.

3. If people do not enjoy the pleasures of religion and are not taken up to the Mount with the Saviour, they may blame themselves. If we seek our pleasures in the husks of this world we are not qualified for enjoying the sublime pleasures of religion and devotion. A mere sensualist cannot enjoy the pleasures of a chaste mind, nor can a mere worldling enjoy the pleasures of a pious Christian. And if the heart of a professor is a work-shop to the world or to the enemy, can he naturally hope to enjoy the visits of the Holy Ghost? If the proclamation in the church-yard gives a man greater satisfaction than the proclamation of free grace in the house of God, is he not a painted hypocrite, and yet dead in his sins? We should examine, then, whether we are the chaste spouse of Christ, or live in whoredom and adultery with the world. God will never call you in such a state to the Mount.

Lastly—If the sight seen upon Tabor was so glorious, how astonishingly grand and glorious is Heaven!

When the King of Saints and Head of the Church gives a full view of His spiritual beauty to all the blest spirits above, how enchanting and unspeakable indeed is such a sight. And should we not prepare for it by holiness and a good life? It

is true all the people of God do not enjoy all the high and holy consolations included in the idea of being in the mount. But true it is that they must in some degree possess the reality or religion, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Compare the joys of heaven with the joys of a worldling. If you would form a faint opinion of them, ascend Mount Tabor. How glorious your Saviour shines ; His face like the sun, His very garments like the light ! And if a short glimpse of His glory transported the mind of the Apostle to wish for the continuance of it, O, what is it now ? Take up the glass. Behold the glories of heaven and the land that is very far off. If you wish, then, to stand with Him upon Mount Zion, follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xxiv. 15-31

As the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem is one of the arguments in support of Christianity, it is given in such clear and express terms as that he that runs may read it. We shall therefore endeavour to illustrate this part of the prophecy and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verse 15.—“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand).”

The Jews had the Holy Oracles in their hands, and many of them could read the prophecies. He appeals in particular to Daniel, as he had clearly pointed out the time of Messiah's appearance, and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem. He speaks in particular of the abomination of desolation as appearing in the Holy place. The Jews, since their return from the Captivity at Babylon—though in other respects a very wicked people—had a very great aversion to idolatry. So much so that they could not bear an image or statue of any kind. They had the utmost abhorrence for idols in all places, and how much more so had they seen them about the Holy City.

If the idea of an army passing through their territory without any hostile intention was so very disagreeable to them, because they had idolatrous ensigns, how much more awful must the Roman army be. And that this is the meaning of the abomination of desolation we learn from Luke xxi. 21 : Jerusalem was invested with an army which had the Roman Eagle upon their banners, and therefore abominable to the Jews. When this event was to take place such as could read are desired to understand, the event will make prophecy clear, and those who have the Scriptures in their hands are inexcusable if they do not understand them. Infidelity in the leading points of Christianity is a crying sin, as the Bible is open for the inspection of all. The Jews might now read their sin in their punishment. The Saviour whom they refused comes to punish them for rejecting His Gospel.

Verse 16.—“Then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains.”

Such of the Jews as took the hint, and all the Christians, retired from the city and were safe. A little before the destruction of the city, the followers of Christ fled from Jerusalem to the other side of Jordan. They took the advice in proper time, for soon afterwards there was no egress from the city, as it was surrounded by the Roman army. As Lot was formerly ordered to hasten his flight from Sodom, the Christians are ordered to flee unto the mountains, and when we see the judgment of God upon earth, we ought to flee to our stronghold.

Verse 17.—“Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.”

The houses in Judea, as well as in all Eastern countries, were flat on the top, and there were stairs on the outside; so that a person might walk upon the tops of houses in great towns from one end to the other, till he came to the gate, and there descended.

He is here warned not to come down to take anything out. What may be a duty at one time may be a dangerous snare and a great sin at another time. The people to whom this advice was given were in danger of their lives by staying in Jerusalem. If they saw the march of the Roman army from the tops of their houses, they should not go in, but flee immediately. Life was better than their household furniture, or even their money. To take care of both at another time was a necessary duty; but on this occasion life, precious life, was at stake. It was therefore their duty to flee. It is the duty of Christians to take care of their temporal concerns, but if the call of Providence and of their own consciences invite them to spiritual duties, and if they stifle the motions of the Spirit of God, they may neglect a duty and opportunity which can never be recalled, and thus endanger their own everlasting salvation. Lot was to hasten from Sodom; they were to hasten from Jerusalem, and we are to hasten from the wrath to come, and listen to the voice of God when He calls to present duty.

Verse 18.—“Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.”

He might have use for his clothes, and the excuse is very plausible; but if a party of the enemy met him, he might lose his life, and thus he purchased his clothes too dear. When duty calls a man, he has this thing to do and the other thing to do, and he cannot attend to the duties of religion and the care of his soul. In the meantime death may strike him unawares, and if he had obeyed the call of God and of conscience, he might be eternally saved; and by neglecting duty,

and engaging in the whirl of business, he may plunge himself into a situation similar to the danger which mariners are in when they approach a certain whirlpool in the North Sea. We often see ourselves surrounded by dangers and by death, and if it finds us in the hurry of business or the pursuit of pleasure, we may perish with the wicked world, as all did perish who continued in wicked Jerusalem.

Verse 19.—“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.”

Sinful Jerusalem was a lively type of the world lying in wickedness. When the wrath came upon them, people in this critical situation were in the greatest danger among them. We read very awful stories of women eating their own children in the siege of Jerusalem. Now, the people burdened with the care of families and children and many worldly cares are in greater danger of perishing than others, and their punishment will be greater by continuing in a state of sin.

Verse 20.—“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath Day.”

If the Jews were obliged to fly in the winter, the weather was cold and the roads bad and heavy, and it would be peculiarly distressing to them to be obliged to travel on the Sabbath. And now we are called to leave the world lying in wickedness. We have health and strength and time and opportunity to do so, as the Jews had to leave Jerusalem; but if we neglect this till the winter of old age and trouble, and if the manifold breaches of the Sabbath will meet our consciences at death, how awful will our flight be then. It is the duty of every man that hears the Gospel to leave the world lying in wickedness, but if people delay the work till the winter of old age, it will be doubly difficult. But if they continue in sin till their souls are surrounded by the terrors of death, they cannot escape, as they neglected the great salvation.

Verse 21.—“For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time—no, nor ever shall be.”

We have the history of the destruction of Jerusalem written by one of the Jews themselves, and the description he gives of the siege fully verifies this prophecy of our Saviour. They experienced all the terrors of famine and of fire, of butchering one another, and all the calamities that a very wicked people could inflict upon one another when rendered furious by despair. Indeed, the description is too horrible; nor have we anything like it in any history upon earth; and what makes it still more credible is that the Jews, by their

religion, were obliged to attend the solemn feasts, and more especially the passover. And this occasioned their being contained in Jerusalem as in a large prison, and exposed to miseries which the ear of man never heard before or since.

Verse 22.—“And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved : but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

The siege and destruction of Jerusalem were carried on in a short time. The city was so strongly fortified that it was naturally believed that it could only be starved to surrender. The Roman General, however, carried on the work with vigour, and, as he himself acknowledged, the hand of God was in it. He took the city in a short time. But for this circumstance the whole body of the Jewish nation had been destroyed. The days were shortened on account of the Elect. Many of the Jews embraced the Christian religion, and they escaped. Now, if the minds of the Roman army had been rendered bitter by a long siege, and great reduction of their numbers, they might be provoked to that degree that they had cut off the Jews root and branch. To save the believers, then, the days are shortened. Besides, Scripture informs us of the future conversion of the whole nation of the Jews. They are still preserved as a separate people, and many of them were preserved after the destruction of Jerusalem; because from these in future ages are to descend a considerable number of God’s elect people.

Verses 23, 24.—“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs of wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect.”

About the time that Christ appeared, and for several years afterwards, there was a general expectation among the Jews that their Messiah would now manifest himself. Our Lord found fault with them because they did not observe the signs of the times. Had they examined their own books with honest impartiality they would have acknowledged the true Messiah. He is promised in several of the prophets, and the very time of His appearance is specified. The sceptre was to depart from Judah, and He was to come after 70 weeks, or 490 years from the date of the order to build the city. Now, an extraordinary personage appeared, to whom all the characters of Messiah agree. As the Jews rejected Him, this emboldened several imposters, such as Simon Magus and several others, to set up as being the “great Prophet,” and as the magicians, by the Black Art, wrought tricks imitating the

miracles of Moses; these imposters also wrought false miracles, and brought after them many followers; nay, the very elect, the true people of God, were in danger if they did not beware, and therefore in verse 25 he says :—"Behold, I have told you before." They are put on their guard, and therefore had antidote against the infection. When a new prophet came, with new signs, the gaping multitude would stare; but their character is so minutely described in the Gospel that the Christians might know and therefore avoid them.

Verse 26.—"Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not."

Several of these deceivers led their deluded followers into the desert, where they were destroyed by the forces of the Romans. Our Lord preached and wrought some of His miracles in the desert, and as they rejected Him, imposters led them to the desert to their ruin. Our Lord also wrought some of His miracles in the great city; other imposters brought their followers to secret chambers and places of security, and promised them signs of deliverance. Instead of this 6000 perished by fire when endeavouring to escape the flames.

Verse 27.—"For as the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even to the West, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

The lightning comes on very suddenly, and appears without giving any notice of its approach. A person need not ask, where is the lightning, for it appears everywhere. Now, the Gospel flew like lightning, and pervaded every corner of the earth, or Roman Empire, before Christ, in His terrible judgments came to destroy Jerusalem. He sent His army, as He tells us, in one of His parables, to destroy the murderers and burn up their city. Accordingly, the Romans marched from the East to Judea, and overspread the land on their way to Jerusalem. Now, the flash of lightning is followed by an awful clap of thunder, and the Roman army brought the thunder of war to the gates of the city, and not only to the gates of the city, but wherever the Jews were gathered together.

Verse 28.—"For wheresoever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together."

Our Saviour used to clothe His doctrine, as well as His prophecies, with proper and pertinent similitudes. The Jewish nation He compares to a dead carcass. Now, they were so in a judicial and in a spiritual sense. They were dead in trespasses and sins, without a proper sense of their guilt and danger. They had murdered their "Messiah," and in-

stead of repenting of this great wickedness, they continued in unbelief, and rejected His Gospel. In consequence of this, in the just judgment of heaven, they are given up to the filthy lusts of their own hearts; and as they are a wicked generation from the highest to the lowest, the judgment overtook them to the uttermost. Wherever, therefore, this carcase was the eagles were gathered to devour. The Roman army had the eagle in their standards. It was the bird of Jupiter, and in their opinion the emblem of victory. The prophecy is so clear that it scarcely requires a comment.

Verse 29.—“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

In the pompous language of the prophecy this means the great and wondrous revolution that was to take place in the Jewish Republic. By the sun, moon and stars we may understand the great and principal persons in the State. This we may learn from Joseph’s dream and several passages of the prophecies. Accordingly, the Jewish polity and religion are set aside to make way for the dispensation of the Gospel.

Verse 30.—“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

We read in Josephus, the Jewish historian, of several signs that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. Our Lord tells us that He would come in the clouds of heaven. We read in the old prophets (i.e., Isaiah xix. 1) that God was to come in the clouds, when He was to execute some signal things in the course of His Providence. And the destruction of the Jewish polity was such a signal instance of the power and vengeance of God, as if He came in the clouds of heaven, and in consequence of this vengeance the families of the Jews would bewail their hard fate, and many of them, from the contemplation of these judgments, would be led to embrace the Gospel.

Verse 31.—“And He shall send His Angel with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds—from one end of heaven to the other.”

The Jewish nation, the children of the kingdom, were to be cast out, and forfeit their long-enjoyed privilege of being God’s people. The Gentiles were to come in their place, and this event was to happen by the trumpet of the Gospel, as the

people of the Jews were called to worship by the sound of the trumpet. God was to collect His elect by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. The ministers of Christ were the angels employed for this purpose.

PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

First, we learn from these words that the Messiah was expected at the very time the Lord Jesus Christ made His appearance. Our Lord was born in the Augustine age, at a time of general peace, when people had time and leisure for free enquiry. The Jews looked for their Messiah, and the Gentiles had it in their power to examine their pretensions. The Holy Oracles spoke of such a personage, the time of His appearance, and His great works.

All these marks apply to Jesus of Nasareth, descended of the Royal Family of David, and born in the town of Bethlehem. He was the true King of the Jews, by birth and by title. He wrought a number of astonishing miracles, and crowned the whole by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension unto Heaven. He was the Great Prophet sent from God, and as the Jews did not obey Him, they were destroyed. He foretold the destruction of their polity, and the appearance of false Christs and false miracles. These events came to pass. As God permitted the magicians to ape the miracles of Moses, false pretenders imitated the miracles of Christ. They were, however, the effects of delusion, and soon came to nought. The Gospel can bear examination, and if we do not believe, we may see the fate of infidel Jerusalem. Similar will be the fate of all unbelievers, sooner or later, here or hereafter.

2. There are such strong expressions in this prophecy as might induce us at first view to suppose that our Lord speaks of the General Judgment. To this it may be observed that though our Lord might intend it as a type of the General Judgment, yet in fact its primary object is the destruction of Jerusalem. As to the strong expression, such as His riding on a cloud, we have a similar expression in Isaiah, 19th chap. 1st verse, where it means a singular appearance of providence in that country. As to the shaking of the luminaries of Heaven, it means an extraordinary revolution, such as happened to the Jewish nation. Our Lord made use of the sober, established language of the old prophets, and this is an additional proof of the truth of the Gospel. If the favourite nation were punished, what may we expect if we imitate their sins?

3. Lastly—If Christians are desired to beware that their flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath Day, is not this a strong advice to us. We should leave the city of destruction. Let us not delay till the winter of old age. If a despiser of the Gospel dies upon Sabbath, how awful his state. Pray that this may not be the case.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xxiv. 32-57

As the destruction of Jerusalem is one proof of the truth of the Gospel, it was proper that it should be delayed for some time, to give notice to all the nations that should hear the Gospel, and to exercise the faith of God's people. It was also necessary that it should happen during the time of that generation, that their faith might not fail, and that the Pagans might not have any cause to triumph. But though the destruction of Jerusalem is primarily meant, there can be no doubt that our Lord had something higher in His view than the destruction of that city. It was a type of the end of the world and the dissolution of all things, and therefore from the 36th verse the words will very properly apply to that awful event. I shall therefore endeavour to illustrate this portion of Scripture, and conclude with some practical inferences; and may the dew of His grace and salvation descend upon our souls.

Verses 32, 33.—“Now learn a parable of the fig tree. When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh, so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”

The different signs that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem are mentioned in the former part of this chapter. And when they came to pass they were as sure presages of that event as the tender blossoms of the fig tree indicated the approach of summer, or of the spring, which is the beginning of the summer season. Nay, when they saw some of them, such as the approach of the Roman army, they might infallibly believe the destiny of the city.

Verse 34.—“Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.”

Now, this is a proof that the prophecy principally respects Jerusalem; though our Lord had something still higher in His view, as several prophecies of the Scripture relate to more than one event. Many of the people who lived in Judea during our Lord's public ministry, were to be witnesses of the fulfilment of this prophecy, and it was impossible it would fall to the ground; for He tells us (verse 35) “Heaven

and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away." The meaning of this is that the frame of the universe would sooner be altered than that this prophecy should fail; and this may show us the desperate folly of those who do not believe, love or obey the Gospel. If the Word speaks against them, the threatening shall as surely be accomplished as were the threatenings against the Jews.

Verse 36.—"But of that day and hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

He tells us in another place that the Son, as to His human nature, did not know this particular time. Our Lord, as He was Man, grew in wisdom and knowledge, and consequently did not know all things. The knowledge of this might be given Him when He was exalted at the right hand of God. The time of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the General Judgment are events which the wisdom of God did not see meet to impart to His creatures, that they might always live in a state of watchfulness and preparation. And our Lord informs us that the fate of the Jews, or of mankind in general, would be similar to that of the antediluvian world.

Verses 37, 38, 39.—"But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

This was the case with regard to Jerusalem, and it seems it will be so at the time immediately preceding the General Judgment. At the time of the flood it was a time of general inattention to the great concerns of religion and eternity. They were immersed in the cares and pleasures of this present life, and though Noah was a preacher of righteousness, so stupid and dissipated was the generation that they did not dream of a flood till it came and swept them all from the face of the earth. And we see from the words that when men became slaves, even to the lawful pleasures of this life, they immediately lose sight of the pleasures of the next. When people are slaves to their passions there is great danger that they will proceed to unlawful pleasures and pursuits. The antediluvian world did so, for the earth was full of violence and oppression, of carnal pleasure and its usual attendant contempt of virtue and religion. And when these vices prevail and become general, they bring on national punishments. At whatever distance the general judgment may be, it is certain that death will seal the fate of every man. It is of little consequence to the wicked whether they be alive at the day

of judgment or die before it. Our great concern is to avoid their sins, that we escape their punishment. All ranks are involved, for he says—

Verses 40, 41.—“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left., Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.”

With regard to the lowest rank and the lowest offices, some would escape and some would be involved in the general calamity. It shall be so at the end of the world, and it shall be so at death. According to people's state and conduct in the world, so shall be their fate. If a good man, God will not neglect the meanest in the world; and if a bad man, he shall cry to the hills and the mountains to hide him from the face of the Judge. And therefore our Lord gives an advice, proper and necessary for all—

Verse 42.—“Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”

This duty is to be practised at all times and upon all occasions. It is enjoined to all, more especially the ministers of the Gospel. If Christians are off their guard, though it were but one night, for instance, they may fall into such sins during that night as may be a source of sorrow and vexation to them all their days. They may fall into sins that will defile their souls, blast their comforts and mar their usefulness; and this should make them very cautious. And this caution must be exercised continually, for our Lord tells us so to strengthen His argument.

Verse 43.—“But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.”

Verse 44.—“Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.”

Whatever time Jerusalem was to be destroyed, it was an undeniable truth that death was to overtake them at some time or other. And as the time was as uncertain as the time the thief would choose after midnight for breaking into a house, it was proper they should be always ready. A thief does not tell when he means to come, and the approach of death is sudden and unexpected; and if a man knew for certain that the thief would come at such an hour of the night, he would watch. And if a man would know that he was to die at such a time, he would be very circumspect a little before that time. But this is wisely concealed, that we may be continually on our guard, and lead such a holy life as that we need not

have cause to fear the approach of death. Now, the Christian that would truly prepare for death must watch over the motions of his own heart, that he may know how he stands affected to the Gospel. He must watch over his corruptions and over his graces, that he may weaken the one and strengthen the other. He is to watch over his senses, his eyes, his ears, and his tongue; and he is also to watch over his prayers, and look after them. He is like a wise merchant, to watch over his gain or his loss in his heavenly trade. He is to watch over the different opportunities that may occur of bettering and improving his spiritual condition. In a word, he is to watch over his life and conversation, so that it may be agreeable to the Gospel: and when this is the case we can easily see that the life is kept from many faults and blemishes into which the unguarded Christian may fall. A watchful Christian is like a man in full armour watching his house. He is not afraid of a thief in the night, for he is awake and in armour. He is not afraid of an attack, and his house is safe. He is prepared for what may happen. Death cannot hurt him, for he is in full armour, and may sing, "O, Death, where is thy sting?" He has gone with his conscience to get it cleansed in the blood of sprinkling, and he has avoided thousands of sins that might otherwise meet him at death. And as death comes unawares, whenever he hears the knock, he takes up his arms. He lifts up his soul to God through Christ, and his sins are not a clog to his faith. He pleads the sacrifice and the intercession of Christ, and is happy. And though his own works are not the ground of his hope, yet it affords pleasure to his soul that his works now meet him. His sobriety, his self-denial, his prayers, and his alms, like a refreshing gale, meet and cheer his conscience. He now rejoices how he spent the Sabbath, and how he improved the means of grace. But, on the other hand, we may see the unwatchful Christian when arrested by the messenger of death. No sooner does he knock like a thief in the night, than he starts out of the sleep of sin, disturbed by the unwelcome and unexpected guest. He thinks of his armour; but his armour has been long ago laid aside. He attempts to pray; but his laziness, his worldliness, his intemperance, and his unchristian conversation stare him in the face and are a burden upon his faith. The Sabbath Day and the means of grace which he trifled away as small things, and which he thought he could overtake at his leisure, he now sees to be matters of great importance, and therefore his terror increases. The messenger continues to knock. Will now his drunken companions, his worldly schemes, or his great profit help him in the day of wrath? He threw away his armour, prayer, and a holy life, and therefore the enemy will find him

naked when he makes his attack. And should not these thoughts give us concern in time, make us improve our talents, and fear lest we be beaten with many stripes; for we cannot deny but we knew our Master's will, though we did it not.

Verses 45, 46, 47.—“Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season.” Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto that he shall make him ruler over all his goods.”

This portion of Scripture, in a particular manner, applies to the faithful ministers of the Gospel. St Luke informs us, in chapters 12 and 33, that our Lord exhorted all his followers to have their loins girded about and their lamps burning, so as to be prepared for the coming of their Lord. When Peter asked him whether this command was general to all Christians, or directed in particular to the Apostles, our Lord directs His answer in such a way as that we may see that though it belongs in a certain sense to all, it particularly belongs to the ministers of the Gospel. They are set over the House of God, to give His people their portion of food in due season. Now, some require some kind of food, some another; some require terror, and others stand in need of comfort; some are weak, some are strong. Their states, their circumstances and their needs are various. To do duty carefully requires prudence, skill and address, and who is sufficient for these things. And in case the servant should prove unfaithful, lazy and wicked, his danger is pathetically described in the following verses 48, 49, 50 and 51. If he takes encouragement from his Lord's delay to indulge his lusts and associate with drunkards, and, instead of feeding them, to use his people ill, his Lord will come when he least expects it, and assign him his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. St Luke observes further here, that our Lord informs us that the servants, who knew their Lord's will, shall be beaten with many stripes, and those who knew it not shall be punished with few. We see, then, the danger of bad Christians and bad ministers, for we see the Word speaks to all ranks of people, good and bad. And it concerns each of us to know how far we are interested in the doctrine. It remains now that we conclude this prophecy with some practical inferences for regulation and conversation.

First—If the Apostles and primitive Christians had need of the caution and exhortations in this chapter, how much more have we? We find that the greatest saints in Scripture are as cautious, as guarded, and as circumspect as the meanest Christian can be. Job speaks of making a covenant with his

eyes, and the Psalmist prays to turn away his eyes that they may not behold vanity. Great grace does not put people beyond the reach of such advice. Solomon got them, and the Word shows that he had need of them. St Paul keeps under his body and advises the Christian to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. The danger to which we are exposed should double our diligence, and make us stand upon the watch, and not sleep in security.

Second—The great reward promised to the watchful Christians should make us constantly watch and pray (Luke xii. 35). The destruction of Jerusalem is an event already past; but death and judgment are before us. And this consideration should make us holy in heart and life, and the more holy, the more happy. The pleasures of another life are inexpressible. For these heavenly pleasures we should surely forsake the pleasures of sin. Let us despise earthly pleasures, for the joys of Heaven are promised to the watchful Christian.

Lastly—If the clergy have their large share of the difficulties of the Christian life, it is surely the great duty of the people of God to pray for them. You have heard that if they neglect their duty and associate with drunkards, that the Lord Jesus Christ will cut them in pieces, and assign them their portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. Brethren, pray for us that God would make us faithful to our trust, and go before you in the way to heaven. Next to our own souls, we should care for you. If you thrive we shall be happy. Be faithful to God, and your prayers shall be heard; for the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. You have heard that Aaron and Hur supported the hands of Moses in the war against Amalek. You should do the same if you expect the victory. What cause of comfort when ministers and people do their duty! This will prepare them to meet with joy and gladness in the realms of light above.

May God bless His Word through Christ. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xxv. 1-13

IN the preceding chapter our Lord has given us a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and now He comes to speak in this chapter, both in parables and in plain language, of the great events that will happen at the time of the General Judgment. In the words just now read, we have a description of those who profess the Christian religion and their fate hereafter, and this is given us in a strong and beautiful parable, which I shall endeavour to explain, and conclude the doctrine with some practical inferences. And may you and I, my friends, have an eye to heaven for the influences of the Divine and Holy Spirit, to make the Word of salvation and grace effectual to our souls.

Verse 6.—“Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.”

Our Lord, like a wise teacher, adopted His parables to local customs, practices and phrases, which were prevalent in these days in Judea. If we were fully acquainted with these the explanation of Scripture and of parables would be still more easy to us. Inattention to this has made some commentators in Europe fall into blunders in explaining Scripture, and perfect ignorance of Eastern usages has made infidels to dash themselves in pieces against the rock of salvation. In this verse our Lord gives us a general character of all professors. They are called virgins, because all are called to be saints. They are said to be ten, because there were seldom fewer than ten at a Jewish marriage, and it was an ordinary observation with them that less than ten did not constitute a congregation. We find they took their lamps to be in readiness to meet the bridegroom. Among the Jews the bride was carried in the night to the house of the bridegroom by lamps; torchlight was used by other nations.

The lamp of profession is necessary, for there must be a form as well as the power of religion. It is true, there might be form without power; but if the power comes, religion will show itself in a form.

Verses 2-3.—“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them. Professors we see here are only divided into two sorts, wise and foolish. There are varieties of opinion among Christians, and no doubt everyone thinks his own opinion and his own form the best. But, in fact, there are only two sorts, good and bad, righteous and wicked; and our Lord here gives us one great characteristic of false professors. They had no oil in their lamps. Some were wise, some were foolish. We know the manner in which folly and wisdom show themselves in the affairs of this life, and it is so in spiritual concerns. A foolish person neglects his true interest, and would part with his most valuable effects for mere trifles. If a man spends his fortune upon his lusts, or in the prosecution of idle or imaginary schemes, he is justly called a fool. Now, Scripture, that infallible judge of men and things, gives the epithet of fool to the sinner. And as to his everlasting concerns, he may be a fool, though he makes a profession of religion. Like a natural fool that would give gold for “gew-gaws,” the fool in religion forfeits the joys of heaven for the joys of sense. He has the lamp of a profession, but he sees, it seems, no difference between an empty lamp and a lamp that has oil. He contents himself with a form, but makes no preparation for eternity. If the world thrives with him, or if he can gratify his lusts, he does not ask at his conscience whether the grace of God is in his soul or not. Content with a religion that is neighbourlike, he hopes to go to heaven, of course. He does not enquire what opinion God has of his state, speaking to him in His Word; but what is the opinion of the multitude. If they pronounce him good, he is happy; but they may be wrong. Who could distinguish in the day-time by looking at the outside between an empty lamp and a lamp full of oil? It is one great property of folly, to be wise in its own conceit. The foolish virgins did not see the folly and absurdity of going to meet the bridegroom in the night without oil in their lamps, till the night itself convinced them. At this time, and in this world, the folly of empty profession does not appear to them. Any profession may serve before men, as an empty lamp may do well enough in the day-time.

Verse 4.—“But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.”

The true Christian makes a profession, but is not satisfied with a profession without the life and power of religion. He takes care to provide the holy anointing, the oil of grace in his soul. The holy oil which burned continually in the sanctuary (Ex. xxvii. 20) was an emblem of the oil of grace.

It was to burn continually, and the holy lamp of Divine faith and love should always burn in the heart of a Christian. The Apostle exhorts Christians not to quench the spirit (II. Thes. v. 19), and King David, after his great fall, prays to God not to take his holy spirit from him. True Christians know that the flame of heavenly grace is what will qualify them to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom with joy at His coming. But if holy souls are the bride, who are the virgins in the parable? Let it be observed that the parables are not to be cut up and made to answer in everything. We are particularly to observe the sense and substance of the parable. Wise virgins certainly represent the bride, but we know this is a parable, and the intention of it is to show the necessity of holy qualifications and continual watchfulness. The virgins were to meet the bridegroom in the night, and as they could not know at what hour he might come, they must watch, in order to be in readiness when they heard the call. Grace in the soul and holy watchfulness in the life will fit us for His presence. The Church is sometimes compared to the bride; at other times, as in the parable, to the virgins that accompany her. The wise virgins are not satisfied without a principle of faith in the heart, and a life and conversation suitable to the Gospel. If a wise man has a title, he wishes to increase his fortune, that he may live in a style suitable to his rank. He knows that a title without a fortune would only expose him to contempt. An actor upon the stage that represents a king, prince, or great man, may think himself happy if he acts his part well. Not so the good Christian. He is unhappy if he is not what he appears to be. The approbation of God and the gratulation of his conscience are the source of his joy, and not the praise of men. He knows that faith is what purifies the heart, and a good life is what keeps conscience clean. This, then, is his great aim. Without feeling the love of God in his soul, and faith in the Messiah, the praise of men would only hurt his feelings. When the holy Psalmist complained of an absent God that hid His face, would it give him pleasure on these occasions if some Israelite began to praise him for his valour in killing Goliath, his great skill at the harp, his happy talent in poetry, and the beautiful Psalms he composed—surely not! His pleasure would arise from a renewed view of the Messiah in whom he trusted, and from the breathings and influences of the Holy Spirit upon his soul. When he enjoyed these there was peace and happiness within, and his obedience would be prompt and cheerful, and this is the character of all the people of God. Nothing but Himself can make them happy. If He smiles, there is joy within; but if the mind is dark with unbelief, nothing

can please them. One thing is needful, and when they secure this, everything else is comparatively little in their sight. When the men of the world say, What shall we eat and drink, and how shall we procure the perishing commodities of time, the language and the prayer of *their* soul is for the light of God's reconciled countenance. This will put joy in their hearts, to which other people are strangers. They love the Bridegroom, and prepare for His coming.

Verse 5.—“While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.”

There is a great distance of time between the first and second coming of Christ. The delay is so long that it has furnished pretexts for the infidel to deny Scripture, and sink himself into the pleasures of sense. Because sentence is not speedily executed, sinners are emboldened to prosecute their lusts; and the empty professor, by associating with such companions, learns by degrees to imbibe their sentiments. Notwithstanding their profession, they find their humours and spirits to be congenial to that of the infidel world around them. The natural effect is spiritual sloth, and the transition is quick from sloth to sleep in sin. They first slumbered, and then slept. And this in part might, and did, happen, to the wise virgins. Even the holy Apostles slept in Jabor and Gethsemane. All have need of watchfulness, and the Apostle, in Romans xiii. 11, exhorts the Christian to awake out of sleep—a proof that even good men may fall into security and be off their guard. The different warnings and exhortations of Scripture set this doctrine in a clear point of view.

Verse 6.—“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet him.”

When people generally least expect it, they may be summoned by death to judgment. The great day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It comes unexpectedly on the wicked world. It comes even at midnight; they are alarmed by the sound of the Archangel and the trump of God. How dreadful, then, will the alarm to judgment be to a guilty world! It is the time many of them set apart for the prosecution of their lusts. Some are arrested with the gains of injustice in their hands, some at their cups, and others in the very act of lewdness. In the midst of their wickedness they hear this sound, “Arise ye dead and come to judgment.” The trembling of the earth and the burning of the elements make their hearts terribly afraid. Professing Christians are summoned to meet the King of Saints. All the virgins slept the sleep of death, and when the judgment comes, and they are called to meet the Lord, they must obey the summons. May God

prepare us for the event. A great cry is heard in the night—much more awful than that heard in Egypt, when they were alarmed by the death of their first-born. Night is a still and solemn season; the least noise is heard, and the least cause is often ready to breed terror. At such a season, then, when men least expect it, people may hear the sound of death, and afterwards of judgment.

Verse 7.—“Then all these virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.”

It is true the wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish. Good and bad sleep the sleep of death, and though it be true that sometimes the sleep of security might seize the wise as well as the foolish virgin, great after all is the difference between them. The one had provided oil, the other had neglected the great work of their salvation. When the cry is made, and the alarm given, and they began to dress their lamps, the one find they had oil, and were ready to go and meet the bridegroom. The others have only empty lamps. They were not therefore in a condition to go and meet the bridegroom. Ashamed and alarmed at their condition, we are told,

Verse 8.—“And the foolish said to the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.”

When death and judgment comes, professors of a profane, worldly spirit will find, to their cost, that religion was more valuable than they thought. At death they see their lamps are gone out. At that awful period they wish to have what they once despised. But they rebelled against the Spirit that would anoint them, and therefore their candle is put out (Job xviii. 6), and now they see their loss to be great. They ask oil from the wise virgins, but they have none to give. Every man must stand for himself. Their lamps are gone out. They ask oil from the wise virgins. It seems they thought they had oil. What has thus extinguished the lamps? Let the question be asked at a dying professor, and they will answer with trembling lips. In one it was extinguished by filthy lusts, in another by the social glass; and in another by the carking cares of this life. Some extinguished it by a foolish conversation and idle talk; and, alas, all of them, by inattention to things that belonged to their peace. They are now upon the bed of death, and trouble and anguish is come upon them. They mis-spent their day, and now the night is come, and they have nothing. In this darkness and anxiety of soul they apply to the wise virgins for some of their oil. Even wicked Balaam wished his latter end might be like that of the righteous. They despised them in their life-time, and looked

upon them as fools. They believed that people might go to heaven with much less religion than they had. They thought they spent too much of their time in the duties of holiness, and in preparation for eternity. And though they ridiculed them for their preciseness and singularity, they now wished to be like them. They ask of their oil.

Verse 9.—“But the wise answered, saying, Not so lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.”

If we were to suppose a good man standing at the bedside of a poor, foolish professor; in his distress he asks the prayers of the righteous, but the righteous has not enough and to spare of grace. The only advice he can suggest is to go to the heavenly market, where people may buy without money and without price. But, alas, there is no time for this, for the sinner is hurried by death to judgment. Or should we even suppose, as in the parable of the rich man speaking to Abraham, that they ask the assistance of the Saints, even at judgment. We find that the holiness of the Saints is only sufficient for themselves. They cannot help their friends or acquaintances. They upbraid them, it seems, for not making a proper use of their day of grace. As the language of despair will make them call upon the hills and mountains to cover them, the very same language may make them call for the assistance of the saints when it will be too late. The meaning of their answer seems to be this: that if the Saviour, whom they despised, will not pity them, what can they do? Saints, it seems, cannot pray for those who die enemies to the King of Saints. Let us pray in time.

Verses 10, 11, 12.—“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”

What thoughts foolish professors had at death, and whatever presumptuous hopes they might entertain, we cannot say; but one thing is certain, that the good Christians who were watchful and in readiness are received into the joy of their Lord. We find from the parable that some people may die with a lie in their right hand. They entertain presumptuous hopes of heaven, though they live in sin. We read in the 7th chapter of this same Gospel, as well as in the text and in the last part of this chapter, that reprobates and wicked people plead their profession, and even several things they did. But

we find that their plea will be in vain, for our Lord tells them He did not know them. It seems, then, notwithstanding their profession, they were workers of iniquity, and therefore were never in the love and favour of the Saviour. The Apostle tells us that all that name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity; and it seems those whom He rejects were workers of iniquity. They profess to call the Lord, Lord (Luke vi. 46), but did not obey His law. They pretended to believe and trust in Him, expected salvation from Him; but their faith was not of the genuine kind, else it would have taught them obedience. The most splendid profession of the lips, without obedience in the life, will not save. So faith, if genuine and true, will first purify the heart, and then make the life holy, and where this is wanting, though we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, it avails us nothing. How vain, then, are the pretensions of hypocrites! They plead their empty profession, and yet the true saints cannot plead their works as the ground of their justification in the sight of God; and yet good works are rewarded as the genuine fruits of the Spirit. Let us cultivate faith, and faith will produce works.

Verse 13.—“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

This is the general inference which our Lord makes from the parable. If we watch continually over our hearts and lives this will show us the necessity of asking and cultivating the grace of God. When we look within we may find something similar to the original chaos. We shall find emptiness and confusion, and this will excite us to pray for light, and that the Spirit of God would move upon the waters. And when He comes we will be careful to cherish His motions, and beg of Him to keep His hand to His new creation. Adam was to keep and dress the first garden; and when the heart of man becomes the garden of God, man is to cultivate it and watch over the precious plantation. If he allows it to be overgrown with thorns, himself may be saved as by fire. Solomon, the King of the Church, was to have a thousand pieces of silver for the garden, and those who kept the fruit two hundred. Let us therefore watch and pray, and wait the coming of our Lord. We conclude with a few practical inferences.

First—Have we the oil of grace in our lamps? Let us deal honestly with our consciences. If we say we hope so, is this a sure foundation? Would we reckon him a wise man that said he hoped he had a right to such a town, and yet after all could produce no evidence of his right? But some, perhaps, will say they do such and such things, they attend means and ordinances. Alas, we read of many that had these very claims and yet were cast out. Even some concern for the soul is not

enough (Luke xiii. 24). Cain and others had terror; but if we come, weary and heavy laden, to Christ, we are safe. But is it so that we are afraid we may be yet destitute? If so, let us go to the fountain. Let us come empty, and throw ourselves at His feet. Let us forsake all our sins, and come honestly to our Saviour, and "he that cometh shall not be cast out."

2. We may here see the advantages of self-examination and watchfulness. The one will prevent self-deception and the other begets security. They will show the best their weaknesses, and will show all the necessity of betaking themselves in time to Christ for salvation and happiness.

Lastly—We may see the great mercy of God in that we may yet have an opportunity of procuring the oil of grace for our souls. Permit me, then, to address myself to two sorts of persons, who now hear me. First, the openly wicked, and next, those who content themselves with a mere form. Will you then, my friends, go on in a state of indifference to true religion? You have the offer, and the work of the Spirit will make you effectually happy. But if you despise it, or, which is nearly as bad, if you deceive yourselves, and refuse to become open to conviction, you are undone. I conclude with a few short advices :—

1. Call to remembrance your sins—Confess and forsake them.
2. Be not satisfied with being half-religious.
3. Make peace with God and with conscience.
4. Pray earnestly for the influences of the Spirit.
5. Improve time, and especially the Sabbath.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xxv. 14-30

MANKIND were not sent into the world like the brute creation, or the birds of the air, to play, to eat, drink and sleep. They were created for a nobler end—namely, to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. Inferior creatures, when they come to die, lie down in the dust, and have no fear for what is to come; nor have they cause. Man is an accountable creature, as we learn from the words just now read. Though people now live as they list, they must die, and after death are to be called to account for the use they made of all the opportunities God has put in their power to promote His glory, their own salvation and the salvation of those around them. In speaking further on the parable of the talents,

1. I shall explain the parable in a short paraphrase.

2. Show you some of the reasons which the faithful servants might have to improve their Lord's money.

3. Mention the arguments that might induce the wicked and slothful servant to hide his Lord's money in the earth.

4. To point out to you the danger of such characters.

Lastly, make a practical improvement of the doctrine.

1. Explain the parable in a short paraphrase. In general, the man travelling into a far country is our Lord Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is hereafter to return to judge the quick and the dead. The servants are professing Christians. The faithful servants are those Christians who improved their time, secured their own salvation, and did all they could to procure the salvation of those around. They lived to God; they dedicated their hearts and their lives to His service, in order to promote His glory. The slothful servants are those who did not truly believe the Gospel, had enmity to the peculiar doctrines and leading duties of Scripture, and who endeavoured to persuade themselves that God is not what His Word represents Him to be. More particularly we shall find their character by looking over the different verses (verses 14-15). In these words we have a description of the state of Christians in all ages of the Church. Our Lord be-

stowed upon His servants His goods. To some He gave more; to others He gave less, but He gave some to all. The means of instruction and the ordinances of religion are the talents bestowed upon Christians.

Verses 16, 17, 18.—We see here the different use these servants made of their Lord's money. Some received five talents. These were the Apostles and men who had eminent gifts and graces in the Church. They got great grace, and improved it to the highest degree. Others got two talents, and these are ordinary pastors and Christians, and they improved them likewise. Those who got the one talent may represent the bulk of those who hear the Gospel. We find the slothful servant hid his Lord's money in the earth, and this points out the character of worldly Christians, whether clergy or laymen. They bury their talents in the earth. Instead of improving their advantages to the glory of God, they seek their happiness in worldly pleasures. Whatever mental abilities, learning or knowledge of the Gospel they may possess, these are hid like money buried in the earth. Though you were in their company or in their houses you cannot discern religion more than you could see money hid under the ground. Their religion is buried in the cares and bustle to acquire riches and pomp, honour or pleasure. As money hid in the earth can be of no service to the possessor or to any other, so likewise their knowledge of religion they never reduce to practice. The things of this world take up their time and attention, and exclude all thoughts of hereafter.

Verses 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.—When the Lord of the servants made His appearance, and called them to account, we see by these words that He bestows a rich and liberal reward upon those who faithfully improved their advantages. Happy are those who make a good use of the time and talents bestowed upon them. Those who got the two talents are rewarded as well as those who received the five. There are different degrees in glory as there are men of different abilities in the Church; but we find they are all happy that enter into the joy of their Lord. Blest is the state of faithful servants.

Verses 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.—In these awful words we find the fate of wicked, slothful and worldly Christians. The man with one talent hid his Lord's money in the earth. He formed hard and awful opinions of God, as requiring from His creatures what they are not able to perform. Instead of trading with his Lord's money, or putting it in the bank, he hid it in the earth. Now, this represents the fate of those who find pretexts for their own slothfulness, enmity and indifference to religion. If people neglect prayer to God, if they despise the duties of religion and the care of the soul,

they have an excuse at hand. They have temporal concerns to look after, and they look upon God as either very severe, or absolutely merciful. Either extremes are injurious to the Creator, and He resents such opinions and practices severely, as the texts informs us. However easy it may be for people to excuse themselves to men for their neglect of the one thing needful, we find that this will not answer before the judgment seat.

All the pleas and excuses of the slothful servant go for nothing. The reward he might get was bestowed upon the man that improved his talents, and for hiding his Lord's money he is hurried into utter darkness, to a place of unavailing sorrow and misery. And this method of proceeding sets the mercy and justice of God in the clearest light, vindicates the Divine attributes before surrounding and applauding multitudes, stops the mouths of sinners, and excites the gratitude of saints.

Second—Show you some of the reasons which the faithful servants might have to improve their Lord's money.

In things belonging to this same life men of common-sense are actuated by some motive or other for what they do; and though some of their actions might appear to those around them foolish and absurd, if they knew their reasons they would justify their conduct. It is so in the important concerns of eternity. If the eyes of mankind were opened, they would see the propriety of everything the people of God do to secure their own salvation; and if salvation is a great word, they will not be surprised to find them willing also to promote the salvation of others. They can produce solid and substantial reasons; and if people were open to conviction, they would soon see the force of them.

1. The faithful servants saw the value of the talents. People are reckoned wise men who love and improve their money. It was the advice of a prudent, worldly man to take care of the pence, and then a man will naturally take care of the pounds. If we see a young person very careful of small sums, we are ready to prognosticate his future success in the world. And this often happens, for God rewards honest industry in this same life. Now, the Christian sees the value of the soul, the value of grace, the value of time, and its connection with eternity; and this makes him improve his opportunities, because he sees they are precious. A sensible, worldly man will improve a good harvest day, and will avail himself of wind and tide to promote his interests; but as he knows that there are but few days that bring him great profit, he does not neglect small profit. If there are days in which he may gain pounds, he does not reckon the day lost in which

he can gain shillings. The good Christian is in the same way; there are some days in which, in his own experience, enrich his soul; but he does not neglect any day in which he can get improvement. Like the men going to Emmaus, when he cannot enjoy the presence of his Lord and Master, he goes where he can find two or three of His gathered together, and there he meets his Saviour in the comforts and promises of His Word.

2. They saw that it was their Lord's money, and that they must account for it. A Christian is like the overseer of a great man who is gone from home and left his concerns in his hands. Now, in a steward it is required that a man be found faithful. He must not use freedom with what belongs to his master, or handle his money as if it were his own. Now, everything we possess belongs to God, and we must not say with some wicked characters our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us? Whatever rank a Christian is in, he considers God as the possessor and Lord of heaven and earth, and himself only as His servant. Impressed with this thought, he does not use the world as if he himself was lord of what he possesses. Whatever advantage he enjoys, whether in a temporal or spiritual view, he improves as a person that must give account. Has he riches, he does not squander them on his lusts, or increase them at the expense of his fellow-creatures. If he has an opportunity of the Gospel, he is wise in his day, and lays hold on eternal life. Whether he is poor or rich, his great aim is to act his part properly, and have clear accounts when his Lord calls him.

3. He was actuated by love to his Lord and to His interests. The faithful servants, whether they obtain five or two talents, each are equally faithful to their Lord. They found that their Lord had bestowed His money upon them. They feel gratitude and love, and this excites them to improve their advantages. Whatever they enjoy, they know the way to obtain more is to make a good use of what they have. Has God bestowed His grace upon them? Due improvement has doubled their talents. Do searching thoughts occasionally possess them that they have not grace? By waiting on the means and crying earnestly to heaven for that precious gift, they knew that thousands have obtained grace. They wait likewise, and God, in His mercy, meets their souls. They are grateful for the day of small things, and feel the promptings of love and gratitude for the smallest thing they enjoy. This increases their stock, and turns their water into wine. The least thing that proceeds from this Divine principle is accepted by the gracious King of Heaven, and turns to their account. It is like the Philosopher's Stone, that is said to

convert everything into gold. Good Christians love their Saviour, and when they feel this, it makes every duty delightful to their souls.

4. The prospect of reward might excite the diligence of the faithful servants. In the Old, as well as in the New Testaments, we find the people of God are animated with the cheerful hope of a happy immortality. If the Israelites were happy at the thought of possessing the earthly Canaan, the people of God in all ages were looking for a heavenly country and for a city that hath foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God. The hope of this made them follow their Lord and Master through every trial and difficulty. It was the "joy that was set before Him" that made the Great Head of the Church, the King of Zion, despise the shame of His Cross, and go with alacrity to meet His sufferings. Though they do not work for heaven, as if they were under the first Covenant, they work from a principle of love, and they know their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. He has procured grace for them, and shall have the glory of all their works. And their labours of love shall be rewarded though eternal life is the gift of God. Heaven was purchased by the Saviour, and yet His people are rewarded by free grace.

Third—To mention the arguments that might induce the wicked and slothful servant to hide his Lord's money in the earth.

However degenerate human nature is become, men have now and then some thoughts of the hereafter. Instead of encouraging thoughts that would lead them home to God, however, they rather stifle them. They content themselves with a superficial reformation, and are not willing to go further. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our disobedience, and false opinions are the food and nourishment of unbelief. They mutually strengthen each other, and keep sinners from God. Some of these follow :—

1. Some believe that God is a hard Master, calling us to duties we have no strength to perform. And why should we make the attempt? If we yield to this cruel thought, it will breed enmity to the God that made us. It is true that God calls us to believe and repent, and that of ourselves we cannot do either. But does this excuse us for unbelief and impenitence? It surely does not. At the same time that our Lord and His disciples show the weakness and corruption of our nature, they show also the malignant poison and danger of unbelief. Our Lord tells the Jews, as He also tells us, that no man can believe except the Father draw him; but does not our Lord also inform us that if we are convinced of our weakness and call for His assistance, that He will give His Holy

Spirit. God offers strength, and He never yet refused any that came to Him. Did God do any injury to His people Israel at the shore of the Red Sea when He desired them to proceed forward? Was there anything cruel in the command? They could not proceed, and yet it was their duty to obey. By attempting, however, to proceed, a glorious miracle is wrought in their behalf. It is the same in spiritual concerns. God commands us to believe, to repent, to obey, to fight against the world, flesh and devil. It is certain we cannot perform these duties, but is there any cruelty in the precious command, and what would induce us to believe that God is a hard Master? When we see our weakness, and when unbelief, enmity and hardness of heart are our burden, and we apply to Almighty power, it is exerted in our behalf. The withered hand receives strength, and the bloody issue of sin is stopped, and we are assisted in our conflict against our inveterate companions and the snares of our spiritual enemies.

2. Others, again, have dark views of the doctrine of election. If God has not chosen them, they say all their endeavours are useless. The plain answer to this is, secret things belong to God; our business is not with the doctrine of election, but with the calls and invitations of the Gospel. There are general calls both in the Old and New Testaments to believe. If we cast ourselves honestly upon the faithfulness of God we shall find Him true to His promises. I have no business to know whom God hath chosen; but it becomes my duty to believe in Christ. It was the duty of an Israelite to follow Moses through the Red Sea, and not to stand on the shore enquiring whether God meant to save or drown him. By following the Pillar of Cloud he lands safe on the other side.

3. Others, again, think that God will not be so severe as to destroy the work of His own hands. It is very true that man is the handiwork of God, and he was originally a beautiful piece of workmanship indeed; but we know that creatures of superior rank fell from God, and are now "reserved in chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day." This thought should be stifled, for it is dangerous to the soul, and proceeds from our natural enmity and unbelief. Several sinners were persuading themselves that God would not destroy them for taking some pleasure and neglecting the affairs of their souls, but, alas, the delusion of their opinion appeared to them in the near views of death and eternity. Such sinners have been often spectacles of terror and objects of pity to such as have been witnesses of their dying agonies. But to speak more particularly to this point, it is not God that destroys, it is the sinner himself. Salvation is the work of God; but destruction is the work of the sinner, and if the

sinner obstinately refuses to forsake sin, the cause of his misery, and lives and dies in sin, it is just of God to forsake him and leave him to perish in his rebellion.

Lastly—Others take refuge in an absolute unscriptural view of Divine mercy. They do no harm, or if they are sinners, they hope God is merciful; and then they set up an absolutely merciful God without justice, without holiness, and without truth.

But to show the absurdity of this unscriptural view of mercy, let us take another of the Divine attributes, and reason about it without book.

God has almighty power. Let us then suppose that some poor, foolish man argues in this manner : God has infinite power, and I hope He will either create another world, or at least cause a new island to emerge out of the sea, and make me lord and master thereof. We may now ask, What authority hath this poor man from commonsense or from Scripture that almighty power will form such an island. Such, then, is the sandy foundation of that man who forms unscriptural views of Divine mercy. Infinite wisdom is the best judge how mercy is to be extended, as it is the best judge also how far the power is to be exerted. God has revealed His mercy in the Gospel, and if we are wise we will receive it through the hands of a Mediator. Otherwise God is a consuming fire.

Fourth—Point out the dangers of such characters.

1. It often happens that gross sinners take concern for their souls; these take none. In all ages of the Church we could mention several great sinners that have been converted to God; but it is very difficult, and in cases, I had almost said, impossible to strike conviction into the hearts of slothful sinners, that think well of their own state. What ails them ? they say. In our Saviour's time the Pharisees could boast that they fasted and prayed. These people, however, notwithstanding their duties, were covetous worldlings, and hid their Lord's money in the earth. They resisted the grace of God, at the same time that publicans and great sinners repented and believed the Gospel. The gross sinners of Corinth are converted. The polite philosophers of Athens ridiculed the Apostle and His doctrine. And as the pride of learning made these reject the Gospel, the pride of duties and great spiritual riches make such persons hide their Lord's money in the earth.

2. Doing nothing for the soul is the road to perdition. Scripture informs us that if the tree does not produce good fruit it is cut down and cast into the fire; and the doctrine of the parable informs us that the unprofitable servant is cast

into outer darkness to the place of misery and woe. And this proves to us the great danger of such persons. These people will easily see the awful situation of gross sinners that live in open rebellion to the revealed will of Heaven; and, alas, their own situation is equally dangerous, and their sin and their punishment may be equally great. There is a stigma set upon the young man in the Gospel, the Church of Laodicea, and the proud Pharisee, as well as there is upon Jezebel and Simon Magus. It seems, then, that people may be unprofitable servants though they perform some unavailing duties in religion. A heap of chaff may have a great bulk, but a landlord will not receive it from his tenant for rent instead of wholesome grain. Can duties without the love of God, proceeding from hearts full of enmity, corruption, and unbelief, merit the reward of heaven? If we do nothing at all, or rest in duties without a Saviour, we are unprofitable servants. The garden will be overgrown with thorns; that is the property of the slothful servant. It is in spiritual, as it is in natural, things, if a garden is not kept in cultivation it will produce useless and noxious weeds; and spiritual sloth will have the same effect upon the inner man. Persons professing religion are often slaves to unsanctified and irregular passions. They attempt to reconcile the gratification of their lusts with attendance upon religious duties. The harlot (Prov. vii. 14) paid her vows. The Pharisee that devoured widows' houses made long prayers, and paid by these. But such characters take no pains with the heart, and do not seek to eradicate and destroy their evil propensities. Accordingly, they are as ready to cheat, to lie, to curse and swear, to scold, to give bad language, to get drunk, and indulge their appetites after leaving church as they were before. They take no pains with the improvement of their minds and the government of their minds. So their lives are disgraced with several ugly lusts, and their devotions are preceded and followed by their unbridled and furious passions and unruly appetites.

Let us now apply the doctrine to our consciences.

1st. Are we slothful or faithful servants? Is the general course of our actions, in spite of human weaknesses, such as may encourage us to hope that the God of truth will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." Are we honest in our dealings with God and man? Do we impose upon the ignorance of our fellow-men, by asking three times the value of what we give them? Would we take upon ourselves to ask such a price if the Saviour Himself was standing by? Do we frame our actions as if He were present?

2nd. If the man that hid his talent is as lost, what will become of those who abuse their talents by drink, by uncleanness, by tricks and villainy? What will come of the covetous wretch that is conscious he imposes upon his neighbour, that sells his conscience to increase his gain, and buries his talent in a heap of lying tricks and excuses?

3rd. Lastly.—We see that such characters are cast into outer darkness. This is the emphasis of their misery—they do not see the face of God, or the cheering light of the Gospel. There is no promise of mercy in the regions of despair. They no longer impose by false appearances.

Let us repent and be wise in time, and God bless His Word.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xxv. 31 to End

WE are informed by the Apostle that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is more clearly revealed than it was under the Old Testament. Though the Pagan philosophers have many beautiful sentiments about it, they often speak with doubt and uncertainty about this great point. Our Lord, therefore, in the latter part of this chapter, tells us in plain language of a future judgment. I shall therefore offer some few thoughts upon this portion of Scripture, and conclude with practical inferences.

Verse 31.—“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the Holy Angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of His Glory.”

Nothing is more august than the description which the Scripture gives of the Day of Judgment. The great King of Saints, the Incarnate God, shall descend from heaven, attended by His holy angels. His chariots are said to be twenty thousand thousands of angels. It is not a few legions that will come upon that illustrious occasion; but the whole angelic host. They shall descend so far as to be in sight of some particular spot of this earth, and when this happens, He shall sit upon a great white throne. In comparison to this, what are the thrones of earthly sovereigns and short-lived Kings but idle sport and pageantry.

Verse 32.—“And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.”

The great White Throne shall be visible to the whole human race, for all nations shall be gathered before Him; and when this happens, a division shall be made, for the righteous shall be separated from the wicked. Though they lived together in this life, the righteous, discerning Judge shall put them asunder. Though vile hypocrites and slippery sin-exercising professors meet here with His people, in that day they must appear in their proper colours, and have their portions accordingly. They are divided only into two sorts—the sheep and the goats. The

righteous are compared to sheep—a harmless, innocent useful animal. Christians are remarkable for their innocent simplicity, integrity, and usefulness of their lives. In the East, sheep were taught to follow the shepherd. They knew his voice and followed him, and he lead them into green pastures, cooling shades, and refreshing streams; and the people of God thus follow the Saviour. The goat is a lascivious, quarrelsome, and stinking animal, and therefore a semblance of the wicked. They gratify their lusts, live in malice and envy, and their ill-savour is felt in their conversation and dealings. Their conversation is idle and useless at best. It has often a sting in it, and is calculated to do hurt, and to sow spiritual poison. They are the friends of sin at heart, and if they find the smallest shadow, they are ready to extenuate guilt and excuse the sinner. If a goat, a fox, a wolf or a tiger could speak, each of them would excuse what himself is guilty and fond of. And this is the true character of the wicked. From the grossest tyrant that fills a throne to the meanest beggar in rags, every one of them, without exception, will defend sin. The goat has a rotten smell, and the sinner has a rotten breath, and you will discover it in the nauseous manner in which he supports sin.

Verse 33.—“And He shall set the sheep on the right hand and the goats on the left.”

A distinction shall then be made between the righteous and the wicked. In this world we may observe very often virtue in misery and want, and impudent, bare-faced evil triumphant. The good man may pine in prison, or sink under contempt, while the ungodly race flourish like the palm tree. Truth, freedom and religion may be trampled under foot, and wickedness ride in state and triumph. But the Saviour, who is no respecter of persons, shall give to each their due. The righteous shall sing and shine, and the wicked be sent to the regions of despair.

Verse 34.—“Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

In this address of our Lord to His people we see that they are indebted for their happiness to the distinguishing, everlasting love of God. They are blessed of the Father, and the Kingdom is prepared for them from the foundation of the world. As the earthly Canaan was promised and prepared for the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the heavenly Canaan was prepared for the spiritual seed of Christ. It is not given in consequence of their own merits. They are indebted to the love and grace of God for the kingdom they possess.

Verses 35-36.—“For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me. I was sick and ye visited me. I was in prison and ye came unto me.”

In these words we find the true character of the people of God. Though good works are not the procuring cause of their salvation, they are their distinguishing marks. Love to the Lord Jesus animates all the chosen people of God, and the manner in which they show this is by love to His people and to His cause. The Psalmist (Ps. xvi.) acknowledges that His “goodness could not reach to God, but that he would show love to the excellent of the earth, in whom were all his delight.” And what is done to these, our Lord takes as if it were done to Himself. “I was hungry,” says He, “and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and ye gave me drink,” etc. They also love His cause, and this He also considers as done to Himself. “I was in prison and ye came unto me.” They not only support His people in low circumstances, but they also countenance them when suffering for righteousness sake. They support the good cause, and do not forsake His people, even in prison. They love virtue and religion in the meanest garb, and when they see grace shining, even in poverty and rags, they can love and esteem the Saint.

Verses 37, 38, 39.—“Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee, or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in, or naked, and clothed Thee; or when saw we Thee sick and in prison, and came unto Thee?”

In these words the modesty, humility, and self-denial of the saints is very conspicuous. Conscious of their own unworthiness and the great disproportion between their poor services and such a glorious reward, they seem to blush with holy confusion at the thought. A sense of coldness in their love to the best of friends and benefactors makes them ask, “When saw we Thee an hungered,” etc. Let it be remarked that these are “paraboli cal” expressions—not that these very words will pass between Christ and His people, for they surely knew that they performed these good works. But this shows their wonder and astonishment at the goodness of their Saviour.

Verse 40.—“And the King shall answer and say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

The connection between Christ and His people is such that He considers the injuries done them, and the benefits bestowed upon them, as done to Himself. When Saul per-

secuted the Church He considers it as done to Himself. And He accepts even the cup of cold water given to one of His people as if He got a refreshing drink. And in the words of the text, He informs that the love shown to His people in acts of kindness and mercy are the best proof we can give of our love to Christ Himself. If we love a little grace in one of His people, it may be naturally concluded that we love the great fountain from whence this grace proceeds, and that is Christ our Lord.

Verse 41.—“Then shall He say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, unto everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

After pronouncing the sentence of absolution to His people, He now turns to the wicked, and pronounces their awful doom. They had heard the Gospel, and rejected all the offers of mercy proposed to them. Instead of embracing the blessed news, they gratified their cursed lusts, and preferred the service of the devil to the glorious freedom and privileges of the children of God. And as they associated with wicked spirits, they now share their punishment. The fire was prepared for reprobate angels, and if they rushed into it with their eyes open, the blame is at their own door. The justice of God is clear; they got many warnings, and held a deaf ear to the calls of the Gospel.

Verses 42, 43.—“For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

It is necessary once more to observe that these are parabolical expressions. We are not to suppose that there will be no other process but what we have in these words. There are many thousands of crimes for which the wicked shall be condemned; but there is none mentioned here except one, that is, want of love to Christ and His cause, showing itself in their indifference to His people. The want of love to Christ shows itself in many ways. Some persecuted and murdered His followers; others mocked and ridiculed them. A third set despise the message they bring from God, break His Holy Day, and set light by His Gospel. And the persons mentioned in the text are only said to neglect His people, and do them no good. But this we find is enough to condemn, though nothing else was against them. Mere indifference to the cause and people of God is proof of want of love to Christ. Now, as eternal life is the free gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, want of love to the Great Donor is cause sufficient and just to exclude people from the benefit.

Verses 44, 45.—“Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked and sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.”

We find these persons attempting to justify themselves, and attempting, as it were, to deny the charge. They ask when they saw Him in such circumstances. We cannot suppose that none of this great multitude gave nothing to the poor; many, perhaps a great part of them, did; but it seems they did not give it to Christ, and this stops their mouth. It also confutes that senseless opinion of the common people that alms procure heaven, and that people are happy who give away a great deal of their substance. But, it may be asked, have they given it to Christ? Several causes may make people very liberal of their means; some do it from a natural kind of generosity, as some people are constitutionally sober and chaste; others are bountiful to procure to themselves a great name. Many part with their gear to flatterers, and others do it hoping it will be a compensation for their sins, and open to them the portals of paradise. These have their reward, they have a name in the world; some gentlewomen have dressed the present of a self-designing person for himself and made him carry it home in his belly. In this way Providence uses those that would purchase heaven with their works. People may say at the Day of Judgment that they gave meat and drink and clothes to flatterers, to travellers, and to the poor. But what have they given to the Saviour? Alas! this question spoils all their works. But here it is necessary to make one remark. Some persons may ask, Are we, then, to give nothing to the poor but when we find the love of Christ in our souls? You surely are! It is the duty of people to pray to God when they do not find faith and repentance in their souls. If persons were not to pray but when they are sure they find the workings of the Spirit of God upon their souls, they would effectually hurt their own spiritual interest, and this would serve as a pillow for their sloth. In like manner there is a danger that covetousness may suggest such thoughts to the covetous heart. Let us do what we know to be duty, and at the same time pray to God to put a true principle of grace within us; and let us not rest satisfied without that. There are many things we can do, and if we leave them undone, we sin; but, on the other hand, if we do them not from a right principle, we lose our reward. Let self-righteous Pharisees look to this. Let them examine their works and tremble.

Verse 46.—“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

In these words we have the strongest proof of a future state. There is everlasting punishment; there is life eternal. Divines speak of the punishment of sense and the punishment of loss. The punishment of sense is the pain which their souls and bodies suffer for ever. Scripture uses very strong expressions, such as fire and brimstone, a worm, and a bottomless pit : awful images indeed ! May God gave us grace to turn from the road that leads to that place of woe. There is also the punishment of loss; and some blind sinners seem to see little in that. The loss of God—alas, how great, how unutterable, how terrifying the idea. Certain enormous sinners, in the near view of death, would have reckoned it a relief if they could hide themselves from God in the thick flames of hell. Sinners, will you sell His favour for a trifle ? And now an objection is to be answered. God is merciful, and therefore some may ask, How is it consistent with His goodness to punish His creatures with everlasting destruction ? To this it may be answered that there is no foundation in Scripture or reason for supposing that God will annihilate any soul which He has created, and if He continues them in being, which we have every cause to believe He will, reason as well as Scripture will tell us that if they continue sinners for ever they must be punished for ever; sin in its very nature will bring misery. If unsanctified passions and unruly affections tear the soul, that soul must be miserable. And if it be asked, Why does not an infinitely gracious God pour down from heaven a flood of His love and grace to quench the flames of hell and make them good in spite of them, let it be observed, then, once for all, that the “Judge of all the earth will do right.” When God is pleased to reveal to us the reasons of His conduct, we shall be satisfied with what He does. We find in Scripture that the inhabitants of Heaven praise Him in the highest strains for punishing the wicked. God has already opened the windows of heaven and poured down a flood of love and grace upon the sons of men. They refused the offer of His grace, and preferred their lusts. And though the pains of hell were suspended, and that they came out of the pit, and got a second offer, God foresees that they would abuse His grace as formerly, Why God does not make them good and holy, whether they would or not, or why He does not annihilate them, are questions we cannot answer in our present state. At any rate, it seems this is not for the glory of God ; and as punishment frightens from sinning, it may be a means of keeping millions of rational beings in a state of purity and perfection. It is our duty rather to believe than to doubt or dispute against

the words of God. Let us now turn to the bright side of the cloud. It is said here that the righteous go to life eternal; and to this doctrine we surely can have no objection. There is a future state of happiness, and we may now enquire what it is that makes people happy even in this life. And the chief ingredients in earthly happiness are health, competence, contentment, friendship, and the gratification of our lawful wishes. Now, the happiness of the next life are—

1st—Holiness, which is the health of the soul.

2nd—Satisfaction and content with its own happy state.

3rd—The friendship and society of God, angels and good men.

4th—A boundless prospect of never-ending felicity, and new scenes of pure and permanent pleasures, and nothing wanting to complete our happiness.

1st—Holiness, which is the health of the soul! When people meet they generally enquire about one another's health. It is the balm of life, and what enables us to enjoy and relish all its pleasures. Without health, riches and honour and pleasures are things without taste. We cannot enjoy them without this greatest of all temporal blessings, and holiness is what enables us to relish the pleasures of eternity. Without holiness we cannot enjoy the presence of God, the society of the blessed, the songs of angels, and the refined pleasures of the higher House. An incaverned mole, if suddenly brought to the light of day, would start back again to the dark, thick element from whence she came. Holiness is vital to the happiness of heaven. The pleasures there are of a pure and sublime nature. A hog from the sty, or a dog from his kennel, are as fit companions for the King's Court as unclean sinners for the joys of heaven. They incapacitate their own minds for those pure enjoyments; holiness is what enables them who are admitted there to relish their delights. The more pure and virtuous our minds are the more we feel and anticipate the pleasures of the blessed. If we are holy we will be happy.

2nd—Satisfaction and contentment with its own happy state. I have heard of a gentleman that enjoyed so much domestic happiness that he said he would take an eternity of such bliss. People may sometimes enjoy a half-hour of such happiness, but, alas! it lasts but short, and it is seldom without a sting. The people of God, it is true, sometimes enjoy pleasures to which the world are strangers. They do occasionally go up to the Mount, and sometimes are made to say, it is good to be here. But even these seldom enjoy these moments of delight. While they partake of them, they

naturally wish them to continue longer. Their devotion, however, is often interrupted by the weakness of nature, the hurry of the world, the temptation of their spiritual adversary, or the corruption of their hearts. But in that happy place they never meet with any internal or external impediments to interrupt their happiness.

3. The friendship and society of God, angels and good men. Friendship is one of the strongest and purest pleasures of life. Men of the highest rank and talents saw a blank in their happiness without this cordial. Aeneas had a friend, Achites; Augustus, the Roman Emperor, had Ulecnas; and even David, the man after God's heart, was happy in the friendship of Jonathan and Hushai. The more virtuous our friends are the more happy the cement. How happy, then, beyond imagination is the man who has God for his Friend, and that for ever. He enjoys His company, and is happy in His presence. He also enjoys the company of an innumerable company of happy beings. In this life we sometimes enjoy happiness in some select companions. A union of sentiments and congeniality of soul may occasion such pure pleasures as taste strong of heaven. But even good men have their defects, and we cannot be entirely and completely happy in their company. That happiness, however, is reserved for the "General Assembly and Church of the First-born." There is none in that great and happy society but perfect characters, men of complete virtue and grace. There is not a fault nor a foible, a weakness or imperfection, to be found among them. They are complete in spiritual beauty, and adorned with every perfection that can endear them to one another, and attract their mutual love and esteem. Exalted above all the rest is seen the Great Immanuel, the Head of the Church, and He is the life and soul of the whole company. He is the sun that enlightens that spiritual world, and the River that makes glad the City of God. The company never part, and their enjoyments are always new.

4th. A boundless prospect of never-ending felicity, and new scenes of pure and permanent pleasures, and nothing wanting to complete our happiness. The pleasures of eternity are always before us, and the pleasures are always various and new. If even in this transitory scene of things there is such a variety of pure and innocent pleasures arising from the investigation of different kinds of truth, and from a contemplation of the works of creation, how great is the source of pleasure in the next? We see here but a small part of creation, and our pleasures are but stunted in comparison with what they shall be hereafter. People in the higher department of life, whose rank and fortune enable them to arrive at the

highest pitch of knowledge, reckon their education complete when they have made the tour of Europe. To a man of virtue and an inquisitive turn of mind such travel will open up a source of new and various delights, and, after all, how small is his knowledge in comparison to the lowest saint in the Kingdom of God? Only a few of mankind can make such a tour on this earth; but there all His people, we have cause to believe, will make a tour of creation; and what source of new pleasures and wonders? The Psalmist gets a humbling view of himself by contemplating the nocturnal heavens, and he calls upon the whole heavenly host to praise and bless the Lord. And if the contemplation of God's works affords a part of our happiness in this life, it will surely afford a great part in the next. In this state of distance and ignorance we can know but little, and even that little is known by the help of glasses and other instruments. But then the body shall be spiritual, and can wing its way to the most distant parts of maternal creation, and there gratify its holy curiosity by taking a satisfactory view of the works of God. The bodies of the saints will rise above the earth and meet their Lord in the air, and if so they can go to other parts with equal ease and freedom. The best glasses cannot afford the acutest philosophers as much knowledge in a course of years as a single saint can acquire in one half-hour by travelling to the place and seeing things with his eyes. Creation then will open new scenes constantly of ever-various delight, and enable them to offer so many more acts of rational worship. And no doubt the providence of God, which is over all His works of creation, will afford never-ceasing sources of pleasure and praise. But there is a subject which will afford them higher joy and delight. There is a Man in heaven exalted above all the cherubims and seraphims of glory. Principalities and powers are subject to Him. This is the most astonishing sight in heaven. Incarnate love is the wonder and the delightful theme of eternity. Man in union with Deity—God manifest in the flesh will be the song of angels, the admiration of the redeemed for ever and ever. To worship a mere man would be idolatry; to worship the Incarnate Divinity is the highest act of worship in heaven. They worship Him that is upon the Throne, and the Lamb for ever and ever. They worship the Sacred Three and the Lord who shed His blood to redeem their souls. And this their happiness is to continue through all the ages of eternity, and this is what crowns their bliss. It is a happiness without end, and may God prepare us for it by His grace.

I conclude with some practical inferences:—First, we should examine whether we have cause to fear that the righteous Judge will say to us, "Depart, ye cursed," or to hope

that He will invite and welcome us as the "Blessed of His Father." For this purpose let us examine our hearts, our duties and our motives of action. Are our hearts changed from the love of sin, and do we believe, obey and love our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we perform not only the easier duties of our common Christianity, but the duties also which are more difficult? Are our motives carnal or spiritual? And here we should seriously deal with ourselves, and if we have some cause to doubt our state, let us earnestly cry to God to make His own work, and let us not put anything in the way to hinder the work of His Holy Spirit.

Second — If the punishment of the wicked are everlasting, this should strongly induce us to turn and avoid all sin. This disease will rage in their souls through all eternity. How awful, then, are disorderly passions. When they become rivetted to the soul they become a second nature, and they naturally bring misery along with them. The slaves of sin are miserable even in this same world where they have something to gratify their unruly appetites; but in the world of spirits their hungry passions will rage and nothing to feed them. Our wisdom therefore is to bridle them; and by the grace of God get them under the power of religion. And if a person is willing to submit to Christ, iniquity will not prove his ruin. His grace and spirit can conquer sin, and make us run the way of God's Commandments. The way to be happy here, as well as hereafter, is the due government of the passions. Let us ask the Spirit of Christ for this purpose.

Third (lastly) — If heaven is a place of such consummate happiness, we should go and get our souls washed in the Redeemer's blood, to qualify us for being admitted to that holy place. Nothing unclean shall enter. Sinners should take advice, and flee immediately to the place of safety and city of refuge. And let us take notice that as our souls are polluted with guilt, nothing can wash away our sins but this fountain. The sacrifice and merits of the Son of God are and should be our only plea. This opens the gate of heaven. Peace of conscience flows from faith in His Blood, and obedience is the fruit of both. And this will sanctify and spiritualise our thoughts and affections. The people of God have their "fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."

May God bring us to this life through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xxvi. 1-25

WHEN the time drew nigh that the Redeemer should finish the great work He had to do, He concluded His work as a Teacher and Prophet, and now prepares Himself to act His part as the High Priest for His people by offering up a sacrifice for their sins. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and the evangelical prophet informs us He made His soul an offering for sin, and made intercession for transgressors. Accordingly, the Providence of God ordered all circumstances so that He should at the very time of the Passover show Himself to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

The Jews were now convinced from all quarters to celebrate the great Feast of the Passover, and little thought when they were putting the Saviour to death that they were fulfilling an ancient prophecy concerning their own great Messiah. I shall endeavour to explain this portion of Scripture, and conclude with some practical inferences by way of improvement.

Verses 1-2.—“Ye know,” says our Lord, when He had finished His doctrine, “that after two days is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man is to be betrayed to be crucified.”

We have the history of the Passover in the 12th of Exodus. When God had destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians He ordered His own people to slay a lamb for every family, and to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the upper post and two side posts of the door, and to roast and eat the flesh of the Paschal lamb. Accordingly, the destroying angel passed over every door where he saw the blood. In memory of this wonderful deliverance the Feast of the Passover was kept every year by the Jews. Our Lord, who came to fulfil the law, observed this feast very regularly, and as He was the true Paschal Lamb, it was necessary that He should suffer at this very time.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—“Then assembled the chief priests and scribes and elders of the people into the palace of the high

priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill Him, but they said not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

In this deepest of tragedies we see the wonderful wisdom of God over-ruling the blackest actions of men, and from the greatest evil producing the greatest good. Though the high priest and the other members of their great council are willing to put our Lord to death, they chose rather to employ villainy and deceit to accomplish their purpose than open force; and though they thirsted for His blood, they did not wish to put Him to death at the time of the feast. But the Providence of God over-ruled their deliberations, so that He must suffer at this very time and no other. And this was wisely done to accomplish the prophecies of Scripture and to strengthen the faith of His people. His enemies are afraid of an uproar among the people if He suffered at this particular time. Though few believed Him to be the Messiah in the Scripture sense of the word, yet many thousands among the Jews believed Him to be an extraordinary Personage, and if they had not conducted their plot with all the privacy of fear, they could not get the people deliberately to crucify the Lord of Glory.

Verses 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.—"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much and been given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, 'Why trouble ye the woman, for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her.'"

In this extraordinary story there are several things worth our particular attention. Our Lord foresaw His own death and sufferings, and as the circumstances of His death were such as that His pious and affectionate friends could not bestow that honour upon His precious body, which they would otherwise incline, the Spirit of God stirred up Mary, the sister of Lazarus, to annoint His body beforehand. This action, though an illustrious proof of her faith and love, gave offence, as if there was needless waste and expense. It was

even surmised that she did a wrong thing, and that it might have been much better to give the money that bought it to the poor.

The disciples were offended, and this shows us that the poison which lurks in the heart of one man when it breaks out in words may hurt and contaminate others unknown to themselves. The Apostle John explains this story of St Matthew. He informs us it was Judas who found fault with the woman, and made a pretence of zeal for the interest of the poor; not that he cared for the poor, but that he was a thief, had the bag and carried the money. Now, what he said through mere malice and covetousness, affected the upright, honest minds of the rest, and raised their indignation against an action which they ought to approve. And this circumstance should make us examine what spirit we are of, and how far we are competent judges of the motives and actions of others. The Apostles supported the opinion of Judas; but our Lord, who knew the heart, supported Mary and approved of her action. Some things are dark to us because we do not know the motives which people may have. We should, therefore, ask direction from God before we hastily condemn or approve the action of others. In things that are dark and dubious our safest way is to judge upon the side of charity, and to put the most favourable construction upon the words and actions of other people. But though we are to judge favourably of the actions of others, we should search to the bottom the sentiments of our own hearts. We may think that we are actuated by a view to the glory of God, when in fact we are swayed by the covetous motives of our own hearts, or fired by a false zeal. Though we ought to be tender in our opinions of others, we ought to be jealous of our own hearts.

Jehu thought he was promoting the glory of God when he was promoting his own temporal interest, and the enemies of the Gospel thought they were serving God when they murdered the followers of God. And if people may really commit great sins when they think they are performing great duties, how awful is the sin and hypocrisy of such as pretend the purest principles, the glory of God and the good of men, when they must be conscious that they are actuated by motives the very reverse. Let us beg of God to make our motives honest, that we may be enabled to promote His glory.

In this history we likewise learn how beautiful everything is in its season, and when this happens our duty will not interfere with another. What may be duty at one time ceases to be duty when that occasion is over. Mary performed a very essential duty here, and from the character which we have of her in the Gospel, it would be cruel to suppose that

she was deficient in her duty to the poor. But there is a time for everything, and our Lord informs us that we may always help the poor when we see their need. When two duties are to be performed, the most essential for the time is to be performed first. If a man has called to see a sick friend at the point of death, and at the same time was called to perform another very essential duty which he might afterwards perform at his leisure, common-sense and a well-informed conscience will tell him what he ought to do. A covetous worldling may say, like Judas, if he is called upon to attend some religious duty occasionally, "Why call upon us when we are busy, why such haste of time?" But we may tell them in the words of the text, "Ye have the world always, but this opportunity ye have not always." You hear the language of Judas and his followers as they show how little they care for Christ.

Verses 14, 15, 16.—"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver, and from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him."

In these awful words we see the final end of the religion of the covetous. Judas followed Christ while he believed he could make anything of him. No doubt he looked for some profit under Him if He was to be promoted to be a temporal King. But when our Lord began to thwart his avaricious views, he mediates a scheme of revenge. Stung at his disappointment in following a Man who always spoke of a spiritual Kingdom, he at last becomes weary of his service. While there is any prospect of His being a great Man, he follows Him. There are many in these days who have the religion of Judas. If the landlord or rich tenant of whom they hold is a religious character, and attends religious duty, they attend because they see this is for their interest. But if things take a contrary course, they go to the world and ask, "What wilt thou give me and I shall change and sell my religion?" Judas sold his religion and his soul for thirty pieces of silver, and many would sell their religion for a creel of seaware, for a stoup of whisky, or for a small pendicle of land. The man that takes money for the hire of his boat upon the Lord's Day sells his religion and Saviour for a few shillings. Judas sought an opportunity to betray Him, and how small is the excuse that will make many turn their back upon Him. How trifling is the thing that will keep them from the precious means of grace. And we may take notice that all these deviations from our duty to our Saviour are so many lesser species of the sin of Judas. As far as we are kept back by a covetous heart we follow that unhappy traitor. When people give up the means of grace

the language of their conduct is, what will I get and I shall desert my religion. And whatever profit or pleasure may promise them, they have but Judas's pennyworth at last.

Verses 17, 18, 19.—“Now, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came unto Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, my time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them, and they made ready the Passover.”

According to the law of Moses, we read that at the time of Passover they abstained from leavened bread for seven days, and upon the first of these days the disciples came and enquired of Him where did He wish to prepare the Passover. And in performing the great and solemn duties of religion it is incumbent upon His disciples to consult His Word and call upon His Name by prayer. It is incumbent upon us in things that are dark to us, always to consult Him and ask direction from His Word, Providence and Spirit. There was a great throng of people at Jerusalem at this time, and had they consulted the motions of their own minds or the mere dictates of commonsense, without applying to the Saviour, there was every likelihood they would have gone wrong. We stand in need of direction in small things as well as in great concerns, and small things may have connection with things of great importance. Our Lord then gave the proper direction to such a man, and informed them that a man carrying a pitcher of water would lead them to the man's house. Small things in the cause of Divine Providence lead the people of God in the right way. He did not tell the man's name, and though this circumstance was small, it showed the wisdom of the Saviour. Had He told his name this would have given Judas an opportunity of disturbing the Lord's Supper. Our Lord knew what was preparing in his heart, and therefore concealed the man's name, and this should be an example to us. When we suspect people from unfavourable circumstances in their conduct to be ill-inclined to religion, we ought to beware of them. And though we cannot exclude them, we ought not to admit them to the intimacy that belongs to the people of God. Though our Lord knew that Judas was a hypocrite and a thief, yet, like a wise man who has a dishonest servant, of whom himself and others are suspicious, He does not dismiss him till he proves by his conduct that he is a villain. But he takes good care that such a servant should not be trusted with anything of consequence. Had Judas known where the Passover was to be kept, he might have brought the band of soldiers to the

house and prevented the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Lord therefore wisely concealed that from him, so that he could not execute his purpose till the work of God was over.

Verse 20.—“Now when the even was come He sat down with the twelve.”

And in this the wisdom and patience of our Lord discover themselves. He permits Judas to sit down, though He knew what was in his heart. He did not exclude Judas till Judas excluded himself. And this shows us what is the rule proper for churchmen to follow. Sealing ordinances are not to be refused to people though we suspected they lived in sin, if we cannot prove our suspicion. We may show their danger, and give them our best advice agreeably to Scripture. Even Judas is permitted to sit down with the rest (verse 21), and as they did eat, He said, “Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me.” The meek and lowly Saviour, we see, had an enemy and traitor among His domestics. But the perfidy of the apostate disciple is not unknown to our Lord. He informs them all that He knew this awful fact. He gives the general notice to render Judas inexcusable, or give him time to repent. He does not mention one in particular, for the deed was so base and the calling of an apostle so honourable that He spared mentioning names till the thing discovered itself. Had He mentioned Judas by name, such is the boldness of villainy that he might deny the fact. A thief is not clever at his business unless he can boldly deny the theft. We might all have seen such instances. Our Lord does not therefore tax him more than one of the rest when He informs them of what would happen. We are by our doctrine to reprove sinners, and hypocrites must be conscious when they are touched. If they do not retrieve, they may see what they have cause to expect.

Verse 22.—“And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?”

The information struck them with sorrow and surprise. They did not doubt their Lord and Master; they were too well acquainted with Him to suppose that He would say anything but truth. Conscious, however, as they were of the innocence of their own thoughts with respect to this horrid crime, they paid more regard to the declaration of their Lord than to their own hearts. Being some years in His company, they could not be ignorant of the doctrines of Scripture. They had heard of the corruption of human nature and the deceitfulness of the human heart. They did not reply in the language of Hazael of old—“Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing?” Though they were strangers to this crime,

they could not be ignorant of the evil propensities of sin. Penetrated with humility and sorrow, each of them asks with fear and trembling is himself to be the person. Now, this may show us the nature of true humility. Their pride does not rise at the idea of such a thought; no, they are rather afraid of themselves. Would any man venture to tell Lot, David, Solomon, or Peter beforehand that they would fall into such sins? Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil and sin. The knowledge the people of God have of the corruption of the heart makes them walk humbly with their God. Even the holy apostles, who were so eminent in grace, believe the possibility of falling into such a sin as betraying the Saviour of the world; and if the Apostles were afraid, who dare be off their guard? Had their fear been of the wrong kind, the Saviour, who often rebuked them for weakness of faith and slavish fear, and guarded them against both, would have now rebuked them also. But He saw that their guarded caution was wholesome for their souls. Let us not be high-minded, but fear. Holy David fell into uncleanness; wise Solomon committed folly; and the strongest man upon earth was weak as a child when exposed to temptation. They are fools who trust to their own hearts. Great is our need, each and all of us, to keep near the Shepherd of our souls, and depend upon His strength and grace alone for our safety. We have another lesson likewise from the words. The Apostles were honest, and wished to be kept from sin, and God took care of them notwithstanding their fears.

Verse 23.—“And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.”

To prevent the anxious and distressing fears of His true disciples, He gives them a sign by which they might be relieved. The Apostle John informs us that our Lord gave the bit or sop to Judas; and this shows that he sat very near Him at table, and therefore that his perfidy and ingratitude were great.

Verse 24.—“The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”

He informs us that the Saviour was to suffer for the sins of His people, but that the person who was to deliver him up to death was miserable past expression. He had been happier to be without existence than to exist in misery and pain. Sinners, we see, can have no excuse for their sins, though they are instrumental in bringing forward the decrees of God. They had no such intention. Nebuchadnezzar gratified his ambition, Judas his covetousness, and the Jewish rulers and

teachers their envy and malice, and yet they promoted the decree of God and the salvation of men in the death of Christ.

Verse 25.—“Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.”

In these words we find the true characteristic of hypocrisy. Judas, lest he should be suspected, asked the question likewise, and gives our Lord a title of higher respect, as learned men observe, than any of the rest. Sycophants give sweeter words than true and genuine friends, and from weak people, who are still more open to flattery, obtain more of their favour. But our Lord knew what was in the heart. He did not trust to profession. He saw the most secret hypocrisy and detected it. He told Judas that his treason was not hid from Him. Such, however, was the infatuation and blindness of this unhappy man that, instead of relenting and giving up his wicked design, he hardens himself in his iniquity and persists in his desperate crime. He gives himself up to be ruled by the enemy of his soul in following the corrupt motions of his own covetous heart; such is the motion of sin downward. Behold the fearful end of covetousness.

INFERENCES.

1. If there was a traitor and a thief in the family of Christ Himself, this should calm the spirits of such of the people of God as meet with such an awful dispensation, and make them submit with patience to their lot. The thought that they have such a domestic may hurt their feelings, and even spoil their freedom. But we see the meek Lamb of God suffer Judas to be in His family, and even admits him to His table. Our spirits are in danger of being ruffled when we see instances of villainy and boldness in our servants. But let us not lose our self-command, or hurt ourselves for them. Shall we lose our patience because they lost their virtue, honesty and shame? Notwithstanding the impudence and villainy of Judas, we see the calm serenity of Christ. Let us then in such cases imitate His precious example. The presence of Judas at the Passover did not spoil the work of God, and why should the like spoil our family worship, or our attendance upon duties, public or private. Such things are permitted for our good. The villainy of Judas only hurt himself, but did not affect the other Apostles. Let us look up to God.

2. If the Apostles were wrong in supporting the opinion of Judas, this should make us very cautious, and suspend our judgment in such cases till Providence gives further light. If the Apostles had some little patience, Judas had showed

himself in his proper colours. Let us beg of God to give us patience to wait for light to direct us. Time will bring many things to pass, and will show us whether we are right or wrong in some of our opinions.

3. (Lastly). The Apostles were afraid of falling into sin, and this is a strong argument for prayer and watchfulness. There are some sins so very enormous that perhaps we think ourselves secure from them. But our security may deceive us, and nothing can effectually secure us but the grace and protection of our great Shepherd. We have need of prayer, and to prayer let us join our own honest endeavours, else we but mock God and hurt our souls. If we are honest in our petitions, God can and will keep us. We know not how far the evil principle within can go, and the dangerous and malignant nature of sin. And however strong our corruptions may be, if we put ourselves under the protection of our Saviour, He will keep us from sin and preserve us to His everlasting Kingdom. Let us get our consciences sprinkled with His blood and our souls strengthened with His grace.

May God bless His Word to our souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xxvi. 26-50

SCRIPTURE informs us that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save lost sinners, and the love which made Him undertake this mission never left His heart for one moment. He did not neglect the dearest interests of His people at the time that Himself suffered the deepest distress. It was the very night that He was betrayed that He instituted the Sacrament of the Supper to be a token of His love. In the words just now read there are several things of which we shall speak a little, and conclude with practical inferences.

Verses 26, 27, 28.—“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my Body, and He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

After the Passover, our Lord appointed the Sacrament of the Supper to succeed it in the Church. He took bread and brake and blessed it, and gave it to His disciples as a symbol of His broken body. He also took the cup of salvation, and ordered all His disciples to drink of it. It was a symbol of His blood which was shed for many for the remission of sins, and in order to partake properly of this sacred feast, the Apostle Paul advises every man to examine himself. We are to examine ourselves as to our knowledge of this Divine mystery, that we may discern the Lord's body. This is not ordinary bread, nor is it an ordinary feast. We are to examine ourselves if we have the marks of true communicants. We ought to have true sorrow towards God, and faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and King.

In primitive times, the deacon, or servant of the Church, cried before the Holy Communion, “Holy things to holy persons,” and the presbyter, “Lift up your hearts.” Instead of giving our Lord the kiss of Judas, we should worship Him with the humility of the penitent thief. Judas still continued a thief, and went on in a course of sin, and if we do the same the Sacrament will be of no service to us. And though the

blood is shed for the remission of sins of many, we cannot expect any benefit if we continue in sin. Our Lord told that the hand of the person who would betray Him was with Him on the table. The thief, the heart murderer, the liar, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, and the unclean person should think upon this awful Scripture and tremble. If such characters approach in their sins, without reformation and without repentance, awful is their condition and fearful will be their end; but if we approach with the full resolution of forsaking all sin in the strength of grace, though our hearts are not as we would wish them, let us put them in our Lord's hands to wash and soften them. The blood was shed for the remission of sins. Let us look to the blood of Christ in the Sacrament. As it was shed for our sins, let us get it applied to our consciences. We are to put the hand of faith upon the head of our sacrifice. As He shed His blood for sinners, let us believe, so as to get the comfort of this truth to our souls. It was shed for many. Christ is a sufficient sacrifice and a healing fountain, and all are invited to come and be clean. If we only come to the Sacrament without coming to Christ we remain foul. Our great duty, then, is to receive Christ, to receive the atonement. Let us then repent, forsake sin, and believe the Gospel. Whether then pride, self-righteousness, or some darling lust impede our faith, let us turn from them, let us look to Christ, that we may obtain the pardon of sin. There is pardon here for the greatest of sins. If we have faith to believe and resolution to forsake them, we may here get their pardon sealed in the blood of Christ.

Verse 29.—“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.”

After our Lord's resurrection, He continued with His disciples forty days, and during that time it is very likely that He gave the Sacrament of the supper to them. As He ate and drank with them, and instructed them in things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, we may naturally think that He gave the symbols of the bread of life and the cup of salvation to His followers. Other divines, however, are of opinion that He speaks of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven under this similitude. The Kingdom of Heaven, or Paradise of God, is truly a feast and brings His people to the house of wine. I can see no harm though we understand the words in both these views, or if we choose to follow one of the two opinions we cannot be wrong in either. We have the natural meaning of the fruit of the vine if we understand it of the Sacrament given on earth as the beginning of His Kingdom. If we understand it as the spiritual meaning, it signifies the joyful meeting our

Lord had with His disciples in His Heavenly Kingdom. And He had a taste of these joys when He gave them the first Sacrament of the Supper upon earth.

Verse 30.—“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.”

It seems, then, the work of God was concluded by a psalm or hymn. The Jews used to sing the great hymn or Hallelujah at the Feast of Passover, and it is very likely that our Lord sang these Psalms from 113 to 118 upon this occasion. But though our Lord and His disciples were now in the joys and triumphs of faith, yet trouble is near. The Christian life is but a warfare at best. We must follow the example of our Lord. Though it was now long of the night, He went to the Mount of Olives. He knew well the things that were going on, and prepares Himself for suffering. He did not wish to give disturbance to the house in which he lodged, and therefore removed first to the Mount of Olives, and then to Gethsemane. He did not wish to be apprehended in the house, and therefore retired to the garden.

Verse 31.—“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.”

After joy people may prepare for some temptation, and the temptation may be sore. The disciples of Christ were now happy with their Lord and Master, and were under no apprehension that danger was so very near. Our Lord knew and therefore forewarned them. If we have faith it will be tried, and sometimes the trial will be great. And though God's people will come off conquerors at last, it often happens that they get wounds in the day of battle. All the disciples lose their courage this night, forsake their Lord and flee; and then Peter, the most courageous of them all, is overcome by a servant girl. And this shows what the best would come to if not supported by grace. Well may we all pray, Lead us not into temptation. The cause of their fall or offence was the smiting of the shepherd. There was a temporary suspension of their faith, hope and courage, when they saw the approaching sufferings of their Lord.

Verse 32.—“But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee.”

Though the sheep were scattered, yet, like a true shepherd, he gathered them again to the fold. He promises here that after His resurrection He would meet them in Galilee, where a number of His followers were. And we are expressly told that He met them in a mountain in Galilee, and it is very

likely it was Mount Tabor, which is supposed to be the Mountain of Transfiguration; though He met some of them first in Judea to settle their wavering faith, it was in Galilee that He gave the most conspicuous view of himself, and continued longer with them. Galilee, it seems, had more Christians in proportion than other part of Palestine, and it was here He promised to meet and comfort them. He had, it would appear, more friends and fewer enemies in Galilee than in Judea. His followers might have more leisure and be in less danger here from persecution and disturbance. And when we expect to meet the Lord in the Mount, we ought to consult Himself. If we consult flesh and blood in things belonging to God we are in danger of going wrong. The more we seek His own glory the more we are sure of comfort.

Verses 33, 34, 35.—“Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”

In these remarkable words we see the firm and honest resolution of the disciples of Christ. They were at this time warm with His love, and had been lately partakers of His table. But however sincere their intentions were, they were yet strangers to their own hearts and to the power of inward corruption and outward temptation. Peter, in particular, professes his resolution, than deny Him, rather to suffer death. The rest, equally honest and sincere, make the same profession. Our Lord, however, knew what He said, for He foresaw their weakness in the hour of trial. To Peter, who was more sanguine than the rest, he prophecies a fall. The design of all God's dispensations is to cure His people of their particular corruptions. The good Apostle had pride, and he was permitted to fall in order to humble him all his days. The rest forsook Him, and this showed them their own weakness and the need they all had to trust more in Christ than in their own resolutions, however true and honest they were. And this history may teach us the useful lesson of humility, self-denial and watchfulness. Lord, guide us by Thy grace and keep us near Thyself.

Verse 36.—“Then cometh Jesus with them into a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.”

After continuing with His disciples some little time on the Mount of Olives, He led them to the garden of Gethsemane, which lay at the foot of the hill. He knew what was approach-

ing, and to prepare Himself for His sufferings He ordered them to sit where they were while He retired to pray.

The Apostle to the Hebrews and St Luke informs us what kind of prayer this was. It was strong crying and tears, attended with a bloody sweat and inexpressible agony. His distress was so great that an angel from Heaven was sent to strengthen His human nature, which was now like to faint under His sufferings. And when His sufferings came such a length that His holy human nature stood in need even of comfort from others, He took some of His disciples to be witnesses of His agony.

Verse 37, 38.—“And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me.”

He choose three to be witnesses of His agony, and no doubt He knew which of the Apostles were the fittest for this purpose. His soul was now in deep distress, and He concealed from the other Apostles the situation He was in. Likely it is that their minds were not strong enough to bear such a weight. He was true God, and now He shows Himself to be true Man, with all the infirmities of sinless human nature. Though He was the Son of God, He must have a human nature to suffer in for His people. And when the most awful crisis of His sufferings begins, He says, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” And now, it may be asked, what ailed the Saviour? It surely could not be the prospect of His bodily sufferings and death. Many of the martyrs rejoiced when they embraced the stake. It was undoubtedly the sufferings of His soul, when He made it an offering for sin. Justice arrested Him, and He had to wrestle with and endure the wrath of God. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and no wonder—He bore the weight of all the sins of His people. And if the sins of one man will make Him miserable for ever, is it a wonder that the sins of many ten thousands make our Saviour to complain. There was no visible cause to bring such a confession from His sacred lips. He was not yet delivered into the hands of sinners. His sufferings oftener than once brought Him to His knees, and the agony of His soul brought a bloody sweat upon His body. And the conflict was so strong that when He first tasted the bitter cup He felt a reluctance to drink the whole. We read that He was delivered up by the Holy Ghost for forty days to be tempted of the devil. He does not demur or stagger at the prospect of the trial, for He knew He would come off Conqueror. And we may well believe that all that men and devils could do to Him

would not make Him utter such a complaint. He stood in our room, and therefore had to bear the wrath of incensed omnipotence.

Verse 39.—“And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O, my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

The Great Redeemer knew the business that brought Him to the world, and that God had provided him a soul and body in which He was to suffer. In the 17th Chapter of St John He prays the Father to glorify Him with the glory he had with Him before the world was. He speaks there as the Word that was with Him from all eternity; but in the words just read He speaks in His sinless human nature. He took our nature free from sin, but though free from sin, He had an aversion from pain and punishment. And surely it was not ordinary pain or punishment that would make Him talk in this emphatic strain. We have, then, cause to believe it was not what He suffered in the body He deprecates. He prays that if it were possible to save the human race some other way, that God would do so; but corrects His holy human will that flees from pain and submits to the divine will. These may convince us how great were His sufferings. We cannot doubt but He dreaded something more than His bodily passion.

Verses 40, 41.—“And He cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

In every view it is a truth that He treaded the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him. Notwithstanding the professions of His Apostles a little ago, He finds them now asleep. He desired them to watch with Him, and as the language of Peter was stronger than that of any of the rest, He speaks to him in particular. He renews His advice, “Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation,” but as He knew human nature, He excuses them by acknowledging that though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Our Lord saw danger near, and therefore desired them to watch and pray; and if they had followed the advice and example of their Master, there is cause to believe they would be kept from sin. It is the opinion of some divines that the sleep that fell upon the Apostles at this time proceeded from the agency of the spirits of darkness. Small as the comfort was of seeing the Apostles awake and speaking to Him, our Lord did not enjoy it in this hour of darkness.

Verses 42, 43, 44.—“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them and went away again the third time, saying the same words.”

Though His Apostles were asleep, our Lord was awake and suffering. We cannot account for these strong petitions in any other way than by supposing He speaks of the suffering of His soul. And is this the prayer of the Head of the Church, the prayer of Him who came to seek and save lost sinners? It is, and this shows that He was truly Man. He proved himself to be more than Man, and will do so soon by His resurrection. But He must be like His people, and feel like a faithful High Priest, as they do. And this shows us in what manner God answers the prayers of His people. He gives what is best for them. He gave Christ's human nature strength to bear His sufferings, but did not remove the cup. He strengthened Paul to bear, but did not remove the thorn. And in this way all the prayers of His people will be heard.

Verses 45, 46.—“Then cometh He to His disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going : behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”

He had desired them to watch on their own account. He knew the danger to which they were exposed. He now informs them that the danger is near, and tells them what it was, so that after hearing it they might make their choice either to sleep or arise and go and meet their and His enemies.

Verses 47, 48, 49, 50.—“And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now, he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He : hold Him fast; and forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto Him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him.”

While the disciples were sleeping securely, our Lord was praying. In consequence of His prayers his human nature is strengthened to bear His sufferings, which were now very near. An apostate disciple betrays Him to his enemies, and betrays Him by a sign of love. He kissed Him, and the Lord bore it with His usual meekness, but at the same time upbraids

his perfidy and hypocrisy. We shall now conclude with some practical inferences.

First—Here we may perceive the wonderful love of Christ to His people. He did not forget them when His own state was lowest. He remembered them when His sufferings were at their greatest height; and if He loved us we ought also to love Him. Our love to Him will show itself if we forsake sin and follow His holy footsteps. If we come to Him we need not doubt His love. Let us forsake our lusts and idols, and this will prove to our own hearts that our faith is sincere. And if we wish to repent, He is exalted a Prince to give this grace to those who sincerely ask. He waited to be gracious, and our scarlet and crimson sins He is willing to forgive upon our repentance. And though sin is rivetted to our nature, His blood can cleanse and His Spirit can work a radical cure. Let us taste His love, and this will cast out the love of sin, slavish fear, and every inordinate lust and passion. If Christ suffered, we may hence conclude what they have cause to expect who continue in sin. It is the doctrine of Christ Himself—if these things are done to the green tree, what has the dry and barren tree to expect? Vengeance will pursue sin. We have our share of it, and spiritual wisdom will direct us to flee to the city of refuge. If people slight the remedy they must die in their sins.

Lastly, we see the awful end of the religion of the covetous. Judas selleth and betrayeth Christ for money. Let every man examine whether there is a Judas in his own heart. You say you would not betray or sell Christ. Take care, then, that you do not harbour His enemy. If you indulge sin and lust of any kind it will eat out the life of your profession. Come, then, with your sins to Christ to get them crucified.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MATTHEW xxvi. 51 to End

THE Blessed Saviour is now delivered up to the hands of His enemies, and the meek Lamb of God is taken, that He might be offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. And now we may stand a moment and behold with amazement the calm dignity with which He meets His fate. His behaviour upon this trying occasion is marked with His usual humility and resignation. But He has now a different part to act, and He never before appeared so great. Formerly He appeared as a Prophet and Teacher in Israel; He is now to enter upon His office as High Priest, and assert His right as a King and Conqueror. But as His Kingdom was not of this world, the weapons of His warfare were not carnal, but spiritual. He appears alone upon the field. Men and devils and the justice of God stand in battle array against Him. Without dismay in His countenance, without an ill-natured or angry sentiment in His heart, the great Conqueror stands alone in the fight. But we shall have a more clear view of the great Hero by following Him through all the parts of His sufferings, and explaining the words as they stand in order.

Verse 51.—“And behold one of them which was with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear.”

The wisdom of God saw meet that four men should write the history of the Gospel, and what is wanting in one is made up in another. St John informs us it was Peter who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. He had promised fervently to his Lord and Master that he would follow Him to death. Actuated therefore by love and zeal for His cause, he draws his sword, and is determined to fight. But though attached to his Master, he did not take the proper way to show his love. Instead of consulting his Lord, he consulted the impulse of his own temper, and suddenly draws his sword; and this may furnish us a lesson. Though Peter loved his Lord and Master, it does not therefore follow that he acted right. There are many pious people, of whose sincerity and grace we cannot entertain a doubt, and yet some part of their conduct, arising from wrong views of religion, certainly merits blame. But

let us not censure their conduct harshly. The great Apostle fell, and so may others.

Verses 52, 53, 54.—“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?”

Though our Lord knew that Peter loved Him, yet He rebukes him for the method he took to show his love. Peter was but a private character, and therefore revenge does not belong to him. Self-defence is not here forbidden; but when a man is arrested by those having authority, however ill they may employ it, we are not to rebel. The soldiers had authority from the high priests and the Roman Governor; and though they abused this authority to the worst of purposes by destroying the life of an innocent person, yet He gave Peter to understand that he must not resist. His drawing of the sword could be of no service. In such cases those who have recourse to force generally perish with the sword. But He informs him that He could easily defend Himself if that had been for the glory of God, for He could command presently more than twelve legions of angels to rescue Him. And this was a force more than sufficient to destroy all the powers of the Jews and Romans. If one angel in one night destroyed 185,000 of the Assyrians, what would upward of 80,000 angels do if they got permission? They would in a moment destroy all the enemies of Christ, root and branch. But if this had happened, the end of His coming into the world had been defeated, and all the ancient prophecies had proved delusion. And however precious the life of Christ was, the truth and the glory of God are still more precious, and these required that His soul must be an offering for sin. The Scriptures foretell that He must suffer, and therefore every circumstance in His life and death must infallibly happen. The end of His coming into the world was that He might lay down His life for the sins of His people. The glory of God in the display of His attributes, as well as the salvation of men, required that He should suffer. To check the impetuosity of Peter's temper and reconcile him to this event, He shows him the necessity of accomplishing the prophecies of Scripture, to which it seems hitherto he had been a stranger. Peter, like the rest of his nation, had been dreaming of the temporal kingdom of Messiah. But His Kingdom was not of this world, and He must suffer before He can reign. Peter is an emblem of all the people of God. They are often seeking happiness in this life, and even dreaming of a Heaven beneath the skies.

To undeceive them in this respect, therefore, they meet with dispensations as unexpected and as contrary to their inclinations as the death and sufferings of Christ were to the Holy Apostle. The death of Christ was a grievous dispensation to him, and yet it was the beginning of his hope and the foundation of his happiness. We seek happiness, and we often expect that God would give us it in our own way. There is death brought upon our expectations, and we find that at last our disappointments are the gracious appointments of Heaven. We look for temporal and spiritual happiness to flow to us agreeably to our own wishes. It is our mercy that we are disappointed. The Israelites wished to go by a shorter way through the wilderness to Canaan, and the Apostles looked for grandeur and riches under the reign of Messiah. But God in mercy disappointed their hopes. Not so their prayers, for the one came in God's good time to the promised land, and the others got spiritual riches and the highest seats in the Kingdom of Heaven. Let it then be our business to seek the glory of God, our own salvation, and the accomplishment of Scripture.

St Luke informs us that our Lord touched the ear of the high priest's servant, and instantly healed him, and He did this that the good cause might not suffer reproach, and to defend His poor servant. Now, this circumstance may show us that when people have truly the glory of God in view, and are actuated by love to Christ, that Himself will appear for them at last. It does happen, and it often did happen, that people went beyond the line of duty in the cause of Christ. In such cases God will pity and pardon the errors of His people, and always defend His own cause. And though men may punish and blame them, the Saviour, who searches the heart, will approve their motives and pardon what is amiss. Our duty is to consult the Word, and follow the saints only as far as they follow Christ.

Verses 55, 56.—“In that same hour, said Jesus to the multitudes, are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.”

But though our Lord is the meek Lamb of God, He is sensible of the injury, of the great indignity they offered Him. Though He was a public Teacher in Israel, He always appeared as a poor Man, without pomp or parade, without arms, and without earthly power. There was no necessity to bring such a company of men in order to apprehend Him. He appeals to the consciences of His enemies, and tells them He

often taught in the temple. They heard His doctrine and witnessed His miracles, and they even recently witnessed a most astonishing miracle in curing the servant of the high priest. This must convince them that the Person they had to deal with was more than man, and it is really astonishing how far prejudice, malice, and hardness of heart had blinded their eyes. They saw so much innocence, so much sweetness, so much heavenliness, so much power and dignity in this Man, that it is surprising they apprehended Him. The way to account for it is that the Scriptures must be fulfilled. They were hardened in their sins, and this rendered them fit instruments for bringing about the deepest tragedies. God foresaw and foretold this, and it infallibly must happen. But if the death of Christ must happen, will not this excuse the persons who brought about that event? By no means. They were free agents, and were agitated by their lusts and passions. Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, and Caesar were free agents and fit instruments in the hand of God in punishing wicked nations. But God had no hand in their sins. In like manner, the Jews are instrumental in the death of Christ, though it is decreed and predetermined by God. But how God decrees and overrules the sinful actions of men without having any hand in their sins is a question too deep for any finite intellect till God is pleased to make the doctrine plain. And this will happen in the land of light and vision. And when the disciples saw their Lord and Master apprehended, instead of standing by their resolutions and promise, they all forsook Him and fled. This shows us the weakness of human nature at best. We may well exclaim, with the Psalmist upon another occasion, "Lord, what is man?" The slavish fear of man which bringeth a snare and their own fear made them desert the Friend whom they loved as their own souls. We may behold this sight with admiration, with love, and with pity. Let us not, however, be severe in our animadversions upon their conduct. What would ourselves do in similar circumstances? It was, however, but a temporary suspension of the acting of that Divine principle of love in their souls. Afterwards we find that they acted a bold and intrepid part, and that no threats or terrors could tempt them to deviate from their duty or desert their crucified Master's cause. We see here, as in a glass, our own weakness and our need of constant supplies from the fulness of our Redeemer. He promises grace, and that our strength shall be adequate to our day. He will not forsake us.

Verse 57.—"And they that laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

Conscious as the high priest and Jewish rulers were of the iniquity of the wicked scheme they had in hand, they wished to give the colour of law to their proceedings. Accordingly, they form a court and cite witnesses. But however regular their proceedings were, they knew they were going to put an innocent Person to death. Wickedness armed with power can do a great deal to establish iniquity and crush the innocent. An unjust judge is never at a loss, because the instruments he employs are equally base with himself. He promotes his own cause and not the cause of virtue and religion. Jezebel is determined to have the life of Naboth. For this purpose she procured a worthless court and wicked witnesses. The Jewish rulers are determined to put Christ to death. They stick at nothing to carry their point. They accuse Him of blasphemy against God and treason against the Emperor. And though they can prove none of their charges, they extort sentence of death from the terrified mind of Pilate.

Verse 58.—“But Peter followed Him afar off into the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants to see the end.”

Some may have blamed Peter for venturing into the palace, and thus exposing himself to his enemies. And true it is that the company of the wicked have been often a snare to the souls of good men. Bad company has often robbed good Christians of their comforts and exposed them to temptation and sin. And this was the case with the Apostle. But though he was permitted to fall into sin, to humble him all his days, we have cause to believe it was not idle curiosity that brought him to the palace at this time. He loved his Lord and Master, and wished to know His fate. He did not even suspect that there was any danger, or that he would be taken notice of. He was introduced by the Apostle John, and thought himself safe in his company. But there is danger often when we least expect it. The girl who opened the door, by the question she asked and the words she spoke, seemed to recognise his features, and betrayed him into sin. How weak and frail are the resolutions of the best.

Verses 59, 60, 61.—“Now the chief priests and elders, and all the counsel, sought false witness against Jesus to put Him to death. But found none, yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At last came two false witnesses, and said, ‘This Man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’”

Our Lord was a Man of consummate holiness and purity. His character was so unsullied that He could ask the Jews, who were ready to catch and calumniate, Which of you can

convince me of sin ? And if there had been any blemish in His life they were ready to detect and spread the same. It was impossible that they could hurt him by truth. The high priest and the counsel knew this, and therefore have recourse to lies. They were well aware that honest men would never accuse Jesus of Nazareth of any crime. Such persons were not fit for their purpose, and they would not employ them. They sought for false witnesses, but could not find any fit for this purpose. Not but they found characters base and worthless enough to enter into their views. But though they were willing, they were not able to fabricate anything that could hurt Him. Their lies and falsehood were so full of absurdity and contradiction that they could not agree together. In telling their stories the one contradicted the evidence of the other. And this is always the character of liars. Truth is uniform and consistent. But the liar is confused in his mind, and still varying in his answers. Conscious that he has told lies when he is cross-examined, and examined over again, and asked new questions, he must have recourse to a new set of lies to keep the former in countenance, and the end generally is that the fabric he has been thus building tumbles down about his ears and buries him in confusion and shame. Such was the fate of the enemies of Christ. Their employers were ashamed of the instruments they used, and as they could not set up a lie to the purpose, they were obliged to lay them aside as useless. At last there came two false witnesses, alleging that they heard Him declare he could destroy the temple of God and build it in three days. But it was well known that our Lord taught by parables. The priests, the scribes, and elders, and the nation in general knew His manner of teaching. It is well known that the Eastern authors delight in this figurative mode of speaking and writing. He said many things in His doctrine which they knew could not be understood literally. He taught them that He was the Son of God, and as the presence of God was in the temple of Jerusalem, it now tabernacled in His Person. He did not say that He would destroy the temple of Jerusalem, but He told the Jews that though they would destroy the temple of His body, He would build it in three days, and He did so accordingly. But even the manner in which they told this story overthrew their testimony, for they did not agree together; all they could have to say against Him was by mentioning His parabolical expression, which they either misunderstood or grossly misapplied. They might likewise accuse Him for saying He was the manna that descended from Heaven, and that His flesh and blood were meat and drink which people must eat and drink that they might have life. These and many such expressions were

fresh in every one's memory, and could never be cause of condemnation and death. In every country where regard is had to justice and truth to humanity, and candour, a teacher, if accused of erroneous doctrine, is allowed to justify and defend his opinions if they are agreeable to the Word of God. If he is accused of a capital crime, he is permitted to defend himself either personally or by counsel, as he thinks best for his purpose. But Christ had to do with unjust judges and a partial jury. He knew that their minds were steeled with prejudice and malice, and therefore did not think it worth His while to make any defence before them. He knew they would not give Him a candid hearing, or acquit Him and let Him go.

Verse 62.—“And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which they witness against thee?”

The high priest, to conceal the malice and wickedness that lurks in his heart, puts on the appearance of candour and impartiality. He pretends to feel for the state of the prisoner, and gives Him, in appearance, an opportunity to defend Himself. Hypocrisy is never so odious as when it puts on the semblance of friendship, virtue or religion.

Verse 63.—“But Jesus held His peace, and the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.”

The Saviour still continues silent, and this answers to an old prophecy concerning Him—“He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” There were two causes of our Lord's silence at this time. St Luke informs us that He would not plead His innocence or make any defence, because they were determined not to believe or let Him go. Now, when a prisoner is in such a predicament, a formal defence would be vain. His judges and accusers were as much convinced of His innocence as any speech could convince them. He did not therefore speak where speaking could answer no end. But there was another cause of His silence. Though He could clear Himself before men of any positive crime and could plead innocence, yet He considered Himself as before a higher tribunal. He was innocent in Himself, but He stood charged with the guilt of all His people, and therefore was dumb before His accusers. The high priest was very conscious of the purity of His spotless life, and therefore reserves his great charge for the last, and asks a question, by which He would give sentence against Himself by the confession of His own

mouth. He bids Him declare solemnly upon oath whether He was Christ, the Son of God. The Jews did not believe He was the Messiah, and therefore the question is a snare for His life.

Verse 64.—“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said, nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

As our Lord was solemnly charged, in name of the living God, to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, He declares before witnesses that He was the Messiah, and that He was the Son of God, who would hereafter appear in the clouds and judge the world.

Verses 65, 66.—“Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.”

A declaration so solemn as that made by our Lord deserved a serious hearing. This, however, He does not obtain, for they all accuse Him of blasphemy and adjudge Him to death all at once. But if He who was the true Man deserved death for blasphemy in calling Himself the Son of God, what did the Man who spoke to Abraham deserve, for we find that the father of the faithful calls him Lord, and the Man who spoke to him in the original language is denominated Jehovah? And how did the good man know that the person who spoke to him was God Almighty in a human form? He must have known it either by his telling him so, or by some miracle wrought to convince him. Now, Abraham believed all at once, for he saw by faith God in the Man. He did not, like the high priest, rend his clothes and accuse Him of blasphemy. Now, the miracles our Lord wrought to convince the Jewish nation that God appeared in a human form as He did to Abraham were greater than anything done to convince the Old Testament saints. In spite of all that they saw and heard, they sentence Him to death, and are determined to reject every evidence. This truth that God did appear in a human form was not more incomprehensible to them than it was to Abraham, and yet when it was declared to them upon oath by a Man that never told a lie, they refuse His witness, and condemn Him to death besides.

Verses 67, 68.—“Then did they spit in His face and buffeted Him, and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee.”

Their treatment of Christ from first to last is not only unjust, but also inhuman. Even sympathy and humanity are due to the greatest criminals. But what belongs to such is refused to the Prince of Peace and Lord of Glory. As if the punishment of the cross had not been sufficient, they abuse Him with spittle and insult Him with cruel mocking. They ridicule his prophetic office, and with cruel insult ask Him who smote Him. If they looked upon Him as a person of weak intellect, who assumed to Himself Divine honour, they ought to pity and dismiss Him. Such persons, if let alone, generally fall into oblivion, if not contempt. If they suspect Him of deeper designs, they ought at least to lead a proof and convict Him of treason. This, however, they could not do, for He told them that He had a Spiritual Kingdom, and consequently did not say he was an earthly King. It is true He called Himself Messiah and the Son of God. But this is the unanimous language of the prophets. And whether the epithets they bestow upon the Person who was to come apply to Jesus of Nazareth or not, they apply to some man. If our Lord was guilty of blasphemy, the Messiah, whatever time He appears, must be guilty of the same, for the Child mentioned in Micah and Isaiah is the Mighty God, and had His existence from the days of eternity. That God and Man should meet in one Person is a truth too deep for the greatest effort of human reason to fathom or comprehend. But though we cannot comprehend, we are required to believe. And our belief is not a blind assent, it is a natural conviction. We believe an incomprehensible truth, because God has revealed it, and proved it by the most astonishing miracles. They were convinced of the purity of His life; they saw and heard His work. And when a Man of such character and such credentials appeared before them they were utterly inexcusable that did not give Him a candid hearing. Instead of this, they use Him with inhuman barbarity.

Verses 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75.—In these words we have a history of the fall and repentance of the Apostle Peter. We may see here as in a glass the weakness of human nature, and the frailty of the strongest vows unless assisted by Divine grace. Peter is allowed to fall for several wise reasons. He is permitted to fall to show himself and succeeding generations the folly of trusting to our own strength. He is permitted to fall to show the faithfulness of God's promises, notwithstanding the sins of His people; to show also the certainty of perseverance in those who have honest hearts. He is permitted to fall to show God's readiness to pity and pardon all true penitents, and make them taste of His love. Come, see and believe.

Lastly, among other causes, He is permitted to fall to expose the pretence to infallibility in those who call themselves His successors. There was none of the holy Apostles could lay less claim to infallibility than Peter, and surely there never were clergymen fell into greater errors and sins than His pretended successors; in anything we cannot call them His successors, except in His falls.

I conclude with some practical inferences.

First—In the profession and conduct of Peter, from first to last, we read a lesson of humility. “Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” If Peter fell we have cause to pray, “Lord, lead us not into temptation.” This is a loud call to us to put ourselves under the protection of the great Shepherd of Israel. And if we do so, though our grace is much weaker than that of the Apostle, God is able to keep us from falling; and He will do so if we trust in Him and keep in the path of duty. His everlasting arms can protect us from inward and outward temptation to sin.

Second—In these words we see the awful character of liars. A liar never spares any character, whether sacred or profane. Even Christ Himself cannot escape their malignant tongues. False witnesses traduce His character in order to put Him to death, and to this day liars oppose His cause and calumniate His people. And what will be given to the false tongue? Burning coals of juniper and their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Third—Are we offended with those who abused our Lord’s face with spitting? We look with horror on them who spat in His face and mocked Him, saying unto Him, “Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who smote thee.” Have you a curiosity to see people guilty of this very sin under the clear light of the Gospel? Wait, then, some minutes after sermon, in the kirkyard of this parish, and you will see that awful sight.

Lastly, we all know that an oath determines every controversy. Jesus Christ has declared upon oath before witnesses that He was the Son of God. And if He was, how awful is the condition of all those who despise and reject His Gospel. What proof do you want of this truth? You have prophecy and miracles, and a succession of faithful witnesses preaching the Gospel since the days of the Apostles; you have also a constant return of the day in which He rose from the dead once in seven days, and if you reject these evidences, how can you escape the wrath of the Lamb? You must rank with His friends or enemies. This is the accepted time. O then, believe His Gospel and obey His laws.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW ^{xxvii.} 1-10

IN the former chapter we find that the high priests and elders had condemned Christ to death by an unjust sentence, and now they lead Him (verses 1-2) to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Some time before this the sceptre departed from Judah, and all the power of life and death was taken from the Sanhedrim. They were willing, but were not able by any judicial act of their own, to put him to death. It seems they took counsel about their bloody resolution. But what counsel was necessary? If He was guilty the thing would speak for itself. One would think there was no necessity for deliberation in the case. When a criminal is convicted the consciences of mankind are satisfied about the justice of the sentence. But it seems they were afraid of something. They therefore bind Him, and bring Him to Pontius Pilate, the Governor. They wish to give their malice and wickedness the appearance of law and justice. They trump up a story of sedition and blasphemy, and terrify Pilate to give sentence, though convinced of His innocence.

Verses 3, 4, 5.—“Then Judas, which betrayed Him,” etc.

In these awful words we have one testimony, and though it comes from the mouth of an enemy, it is equal to a thousand witnesses to prove the innocence of the precious Saviour. The unhappy man who betrayed Him, stung by the reproaches of his own conscience, and lashed by the tumult of his angry thoughts, comes before the Sanhedrim to make his confession. He now saw the horrid crime of which he was guilty, and in this distracted state of mind throws the money at their feet. It is said that he repented, that is, he had the first part of repentance, a sense of guilt. But, alas, he did not proceed further. He is abandoned by God to commit a still greater crime. Why, poor, unhappy Judas, did you not throw yourself at the feet of your much-injured Master, and implore His pardon? Instead of this, he goes and becomes his own executioner. Had he waited four or five days with patience under his terrors till the Lord rose from the dead, who knows what would have happened. But we see in this awful example

the end of the sin of covetousness. Judas is a beacon and a pillar of salt to sinners. We may see the danger that people are in who get repeated warnings. He is called a devil long before now, and this is a proof he was indulging sin unknown to others, though it was visible to the Divine Saviour. And you may see by the terrible story what may possibly be your fate if you continue in sin. You have got warning much oftener than Judas did of the danger of Sabbath-breaking, covetousness, uncleanness, lying, and other sins. Your consciences are dead, but they must awake sooner or later, and if you continue to rebel against the Word of God and your own consciences, we cannot promise but your latter end may be like Judas, and when your consciences awaken after a long course of sin, the devil may be permitted to tempt you to despair, so that you may either hang or drown yourselves. Remember, you got warning. Now, if the young and old sinners that frequent this house are not in some sense even worse than Judas himself, they ought to take warning. Indeed, we read in the 109th Psalm that Judas had children, and it is probable that Balaam had children also (Psalm 109-10). And from the conduct of some of my hearers, a person would be led to suspect that the blood of Judas and Balaam was running in their veins. They were incorrigible sinners; they got warning, they sinned against the light, and they died before their time. O ye sinners of Lochcarron and Kishorn, do ye mean to follow their example? Whether these men were your predecessors according to the flesh we cannot say; but we can prove that some of you are their true and genuine spiritual offspring. We see also by the story that some sinners must be made examples. The justice, the truth, and the goodness of God require this. This example was necessary at the time to clear the character of Christ. The Sanhedrim and the Jews in general, in spite of them, had two witnesses that bore witness to the innocence of our Lord, whom they unjustly put to death. The witnesses are Judas and Pilate. And as they were enemies, their united testimony must sound loud in the ears of the Jewish rulers. The very argument they brought against Christ before Pilate, that He was the Son of God, terrified him still more than he was before. His miracles prove that He could not be an impostor or have intercourse with impure spirits. The holiness of His life reputed the calumny. His saying, therefore, that He was the Son of God, when they saw the works of God, should procure the more credit to His doctrine. And if the Sanhedrim and Jewish nation are spared for many years, it is to render them at last signal examples of Divine vengeance. We see likewise here the perverseness of the Jewish Sanhedrim. Instead of taking warning from the example of Judas and

giving up their intended sin, they harden themselves in their wickedness. And this is the case with sinners to this day. The dying agonies of their companions in iniquity do not frighten them from sin. Again we have another lesson from these words. If people are under terror of conscience it shows them where they ought to go. Judas went to the wicked, and they laughed him to scorn. This shows us that if we would wish for comfort we must go to the Word, and the Word directs us to Christ. Now, this shows us the folly of sinners who rest in their duties. We see that Judas repented—nay, he went further—he restored the money and left it in the temple. But as he did not go further with his repentance, he died in despair. Let us not therefore stick where Judas did: let us go further, and have recourse to the blood of sprinkling.

But, in the last place, if the repentance of Judas was incomplete, even though he restored the silver, what shall we say to the repentance and religion of those who retain the wages of iniquity and the sinful penny in their houses? If people steal or defraud their neighbours in any way and retain this cursed penny, you can easily see that they have not gone as far as Judas himself. Now, if conscience can tell people that they have what does not belong to them, they are a step behind Judas in their religion. How awful is the condition of those whom even Judas will condemn in the day of judgment. Have you your master's or neighbour's goods, or lands, or money? You hear that Judas made restitution: and does your conscience remain quiet and asleep when you know you have not? Awful is your condition, and terrible will be the bed of death. And know this, that the warning Judas got by the doctrine of Christ made him still the greater sinner. Your delusion, then, must be great if you hope to get to heaven when the conduct of Judas must condemn you. Restore the money, or whatever else it is you possess unjustly: and after you have done so, rest not in this till your conscience is cleansed in the Redeemer's blood. And be sure that you never can get true rest when sin unrepented of lies upon your conscience. Be wise in time, and hasten to the Saviour.

Verse 6.—“And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said it is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.”

In these words we have the true picture of hypocrisy. Though these monsters of iniquity are acting a very deep tragedy, they feel no remorse at committing murder and taking away the life of an innocent person, and yet they show great squeamishness at putting the money into the treasury. We read of some that strain at a gant and swallow a camel.

Several bloody butchers, who have stained their consciences with the murder of the saints, might feel uneasy at eating flesh during the time of Lent. And there are many who feel no remorse at turning poor families adrift, who would think they did a wrong thing if they kept their half-penny from the poor upon the Sabbath. Some people would feel uneasy if they did not pay debts contracted by gaming and wickedness, who sit very easy under the reflections that they hurt honest tradesmen's families by not paying their debts.

Verses 7, 8.—“And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood to this day.”

It was the intention of these wicked men to bury the memory of Jesus Christ and the memory of their own wickedness at the same time. Instead of this, the character of our Lord shone more conspicuously after death than it did before. The Man whom they crucified with every public mark of ignominy and contempt is worshipped upon earth and exalted above the angels of heaven. Angels worship him above, and His saints worship Him here. And instead of concealing the crime of His murderers, this very circumstance of purchasing the potter's field served to perpetuate the baseness and infamy of the whole transaction by which He was betrayed, condemned, and crucified. It often happens that all the methods which sinners take to conceal their own crimes or to oppress the righteous, turn to their own confusion and the glory of the people of God. The very means which sinners take to conceal their infamy serve to make their crimes the more publicly known. This happens particularly to the unclean and the covetous, as Scripture and other histories abundantly testify. The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance, and the memory of the wicked will rot.

Verses 9, 10.—“Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.”

Although this was but a trivial circumstance, it was the subject of ancient prophecy. They were fulfilling the Scripture, not only unknown to themselves but even in spite of themselves.

Commentators, however, have taken more pains than was necessary in clearing St Matthew of what they reckon a mistake, whereas there was no mistake in the case. St Mark, in the beginning of his Gospel, citing two ancient prophecies, says that they were written, whereas

St Matthew only says that this prophecy was said by Jeremiah. Now, Jeremiah might have said things that are not written in his book, and there was a tradition among the Jews it is very likely to this purpose. We know that several good men had prophecies which are not in Scripture. Thus we read in St Jude of the prophecies of Enoch, and St Paul mentions a saying of the Lord Jesus Christ which is not in one of the four Gospels. We have no doubt but Enoch made such a prophecy, and we need not doubt but our Lord made such an expression as St Paul mentions in the 20th Chapter of Acts, verse 35. And why should we doubt but Jeremiah said the very words of this prophecy, as well as Zechariah, though it is not written in his book? St Matthew had the Spirit of God, and modesty should make us acknowledge rather our own ignorance than an error in any part of holy writ. The Evangelist here adds that this happens by the express appointment of God. And if such a small prophecy as this must be literally accomplished, we need not doubt but the great prophecies respecting the great body of the Jewish nation must be accomplished also. I conclude this lecture with some practical inferences.

First—From the unhappy fate of this wicked man we see how awful and dangerous it is to indulge sin or lust of any kind. Sin of any kind is a worm at the root of our profession. You see the love of money is the root of all evil. It was the ruin of Achan, Gehazei, and Judas, and it is still the ruin of thousands; and wherefore are such instances recorded in Scripture? It is no doubt that we might beware of such dangerous rocks. We blame Judas for selling the Saviour of the world for thirty pieces of silver. And what shall we say to those who sell His love and favour for less? But whatever profit people get by selling the soul, they make but a bad bargain at best.

Second—We see here the danger of those who take some concern for their souls if they do not apply to Christ. Some people, when they get conviction, labour to suppress them. They go to the bottle, or to the card table, or to some other idle or sinful amusement. They thus take poison instead of medicine, as has sometimes happened to persons who get things from an unskilful apprentice in an apothecary's shop. And should even people go to their duties instead of their Saviour, they have but miserable comforters to a sin-sick conscience at best. Judas restored the money, but as he did not go to Christ, his duty left him under the power of despair. Duties will not cure the soul unless it receive the atonement.

Third—If the most wicked characters have so far a veneration for sacred things as not to bring the price of blood to the

treasury, what shall we say to those who would even get drunk in the house of God if they got liberty ?

Fourth (lastly)—We see here how shocking is the memory of the wicked. Is not this an awful thought ? If the saints and holy angels will say of any one of you, "There is a poor lost soul who had pleasure in wickedness while on earth." People mention his Sabbath-breaking, his covetousness, and his lies, after his death. He did not relish holy things, or holy conversation. He is now with devils. Repent, then, give up your sin, come to Christ.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON MATTHEW xxvii. 11-32

WE proceed to make further observations upon the words read in your hearing, and conclude with a few practical inferences.

Verses 11, 12, 13, 14.—“And Jesus stood before the Governor; and the Governor asked Him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And He answered him to never a word, insomuch that the Governor marvelled greatly.”

Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, and if we find it dark to us in one part, we always find light thrown upon that part in another. The Evangelist John (18th Chapter, 13th to 37th verses) will explain to us more fully this part of St Matthew. There we understand that He was examined by the high priest and Roman Governor, and gave satisfactory answers as far as was necessary to clear His innocence. He does not deny but He was King of the Jews. He was of the Royal Family of David, His lineal descendant, and his heir according to the flesh. He acknowledges that He is the Person pointed at by the ancient prophets. But at the same time He informs us that His Kingdom was not of this world, and therefore Pilate and Caesar had nothing to fear from Him as a temporal King. And it is very likely that this was the enmity which His countrymen, from the highest to the lowest, had at Him. For if He had exerted the power He showed in working miracles and doing good to the souls and bodies of men, in raising armies and expelling the Romans, they would joyfully receive such a Messiah with open arms. But when they find they had nothing to expect from Him, and that their hopes from Him as a temporal Messiah are at an end, they conspire against Him, and resolve upon His death. He made a full and a candid confession of the truth before Pontius Pilate all at once, as He had done before the high priest formerly. And after He had done so, He did not think Himself obliged to answer every idle, captious or ensnaring

question that might be asked at Him. To what I have observed upon the 63rd verse of the former chapter, I here add that our Lord was silent for two reasons—

First—His great wisdom must have known what was the proper line of conduct for Him to follow. He knew the will of God—when He ought to speak, and when He should be silent. It appears, then, that His silence was more for the glory of God than if He should speak. His silence might gall the consciences of His accusers more than a formal defence. He showed them by His conduct that He was perfectly sensible of their injustice and wickedness, for He knew well they were all convinced of His innocence. When He knew that His accusers and His judge were conscious of His innocence, why should He tell them by a formal speech what they knew already?

Second—He was silent, to show His people that He went willingly to death. If He had made a formal defence we need have no doubt but His oratory would have exceeded all the Greek and Roman eloquence. Had He exerted His powers this way He might have defeated the end of His coming into the world. Now, the end of His coming was to die for our sins. It was necessary He should show us the greatness of His love in being willing to die for us. And if He foresaw that even such a speech would have no effect upon the obdurate hearts of His enemies, He also foresaw that if such a speech had been extant in the Gospels that unbelievers in all ages would make a handle against Him. They would say that such a flood of oratory indeed showed the talents of the Man, but that it showed also too great fondness for life, and an unwillingness to suffer death. That though His followers boasted of the intenseness of His love to them in suffering death for their sakes, and laying down His life as a ransom for their sins, His enemies would very readily answer that the speech which He made showed clearly that He went not willingly to death. Now, our Lord showed by His conduct that He was above the love of life and the fear of death. He cleared His innocence sufficiently, and if He had gone further people might say that He died with reluctance. It is true that He prayed that the cup might pass by Him; but it was not the death of His body but the agonies of His soul that He prayed against. This prayer showed that He was true Man, but it showed also that He was a perfectly holy Man, and that He submitted without a murmuring thought to the will of God in suffering death for the sins of His people. The Roman Governor marvelled greatly when he saw His courage and constancy, and the cheerfulness with which He was willing to meet death in one of its most terrible forms.

Verses 15, 16, 17, 18.—“Now at that feast the Governor was wont to release to the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus, which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him.”

We have here a remarkable portion of Scripture, and a piece of history that displays the corruption of human nature to its fullest extent. It seems it was customary among the Jews for the Governor to release a prisoner at the Feast of the Passover. And they had at this time a very notable prisoner, called Barabbas, who, it seems, had been guilty of murder some time before. Pilate, it is likely, with no bad intention, proposed the two prisoners to them, and bade them name their choice. Now, one would imagine that by contrasting their characters, they would be at no loss what choice to make. The bare mention of their names would direct them what choice they ought to make. But the infatuated multitude, instigated by their wicked rulers, demand a murderer instead of the righteous one. Pilate knew that it was for envy they had delivered up Jesus Christ; and Pilate might naturally think that they would choose a good man, whose life was holy and whose miracles had benefitted the nation at large. But in this he was deceived. The malice that made the rulers imprison Christ made them urge the people to ruin him. The Jews are a picture of human nature to this very day. Not only upon Sabbath, but upon every day, Pilate's question may be asked at every man, “Whom will he choose, *sin*, the murderer of his soul, or the Lord Jesus Christ, the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. “Whatever their mouth may say, ask the questions at their conduct and you will then infallibly discover their choice. Ask at the bold, impudent transgressor, who not only has committed sin, but also shamelessly defends it, and says he is not ashamed of what he has done. And though he has been convicted of wickedness, he gives you the worst language in his head. Such wretches clearly prefer Barabbas to Christ. In a word, all persons who have the Gospel clearly preached to them and yet go on in the way of their heart, show evidently that they prefer the enemy of their peace to the Friend of their souls.

“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.”

Some suppose this dream was sent by the enemy, who now began to suspect that the death of Christ was to be the

salvation of His people. Others that it was sent by God to bear witness of the innocence of our Lord. Scripture does not say which. The woman seems to have had good sentiments, and as she heard of this Man's character and the fame of His miracles, her conscience seems to have been extremely agitated. And what troubled her in the day might naturally follow her in the night. And if the enemy now at last discovered that He was the Messiah, there is no absurdity in supposing that the enemy, from a bad design, might wish to prevent His death, and that a good angel might concur in stirring her conscience to send word to her husband, because she believed His innocence. At any rate, the dream evidently showed the general opinion entertained of the sanctity of Christ. And in this view the wisdom of God saw meet that it should have place in the Gospel. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus. "The Governor answered and said unto them, Whither of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas."

Pilate, though a bad man in other respects, did not wish to put Christ to death. He therefore asks the question which of the prisoners they wished to release. And it is likely that the people, "if left to their own free choice," might be induced by reason and conscience to ask the release of Christ. But their rulers were wicked, and the capricious, fickle mob, who were crying, Hosanna to the Son of David the other day, now gave their vote against Him. We may see here what unsanctified nature will do in every temptation. The most ignorant person in the mob knew that Jesus Christ was a holy and a good man, and that He was cruelly injured though innocent. Though conscience and His innocence will plead for Christ, base servility and the fear of man plead against Him, and this prevailed. And some evil principle in human nature always prevails against His cause to this day. But for pleasure, ambition, or riches, all that hear the Gospel would be Christians. But some lust blinds their eyes, and they prefer Barabbas to the cause of God.

Verses 22, 23.—"Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the Governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, Let Him be crucified."

There is no alternative—if the one is released, the other, it seems, must be crucified. Pilate now appeals to their consciences, and asks, "What has He done?" To this they would give no answer, and having resolved to stifle conscience, they

cry out the more, "Let Him be crucified." And this is the natural progress of sin. When the sinner's conscience is whipped by the Word, and the doctrine entirely condemns him, he must either forsake sin or harden himself in wickedness. We condemn the Jews, and very justly, for taking away the life of an innocent Person. But if we trample upon the law of God, are we not in this respect equally guilty? Is not the thief or the robber who hurts a poor man who cannot defend himself, guilty of a similar crime? Any man that oppresses the cause of God and does violence to his own conscience must smart for it unless he repents and forsake his sin. We may ask at sinners to this day, "What evil hath the Gospel done? What evil is in the Sabbath? What is the harm of telling the truth and dealing honestly? What evils is there in living soberly, righteously, and godly?" When the conscience is pressed with such questions as these, there can be no answer. And as such questions must naturally condemn sinners, they drown them in the cares and pleasures of this life. The more they hear their duty, the more they sin, as the Jews cried the more, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," when an appeal is made to their consciences. And this is the most hopeless stage of obstinacy in sin. Woeful is the condition of sinners when this is the case. They are open to all kinds of judgments.

Verses 24, 25.—"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us and on our children."

If any man of thought and reflection considers the history of the Jews from the time of Abraham to this day he will naturally be led to see the wonderful providence of God to that nation. They were always under the protection of His providence while they did their duty and lived in His fear. But when they rebelled against the law, they were always chastised and punished till they returned to their duty again. They were often delivered by their judges, and even brought back from the captivity of Babylon. They are now fugitives and vagabonds through the earth for these 1800 years nearly, and, it may be asked, What was their particular crime? They were cured of their favourite sin, idolatry, since the captivity, and as to other gross crimes, they were guilty of them formerly, as well as at the destruction of the City by Titus. What crime, then, is yet unrepented of? We cannot think of any but the murder of Christ. That was a crime so heinous that a pagan and idolater, a gross sinner, and even a murderer, is afraid to imbrue his hands in the blood of such an innocent and holy

Person. He takes water and washes his hands. And though fear makes him yield to the mob, he acknowledges the innocence of the victim of their fury. Frantic with rage, they cry out, "His blood be on us and on our children." Their prayer is answered, and the curse they imprecate still hangs over their ill-fated seed. If the question is asked at the Jews, "What is the cause of their long rejection and captivity," they may mention this and that and the other sin. But we learn from the prophets, more especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that they had very heinous crimes among them in their days. And Isaiah calls Jerusalem Sodom, a proof that the very same sins were predominant in the one as in the other. And how comes it that these sins are punished, not only so very signally, but that the punishment is protracted so long? The truth is the nation has not yet returned to God. One of their own prophets can inform them that if the wicked forsake his way, that God will abundantly pardon. God has been visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children for many generations. And this is the answer to the prayer of their guilty ancestors. His blood is still required at the hands of their children, and they will continue fugitives and vagabonds among the nations for signs and wonders till they acknowledge this great crime, and repent and turn to God. By persisting in their infidelity they make the sin of their ancestors their own sin, and are punished accordingly. The Jews, then, remain monuments of God's vengeance, and they never will return to Palestine or experience the favour of the God of their fathers till they confess the heinous crime of murdering Christ and rejecting the promised Messiah. When they returned formerly to the favour of God they always acknowledged the sin they were guilty of. As therefore they are not yet restored to the favour of God and to the land of their fathers, it appears clearly that they have not yet confessed or deplored the sin that excludes them. The perverse prayer of the ancient Jews hinders the efficacy of the blood of sprinkling from doing good to their children. His blood must plead for or against every nation or country where His Gospel is preached. And though no nation has suffered so much temporal calamity as the Jews in consequence of rejecting the Gospel, no nation or country can reject it without temporal and spiritual danger.

Verse 26.—"Then released he Barabbas to them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified."

Barabbas, the murderer, is released to the Jews at their desire, but not before Pilate had remonstrated against their enormous wickedness. The providence of God made use of Pilate, a blind pagan, a heathen, to deter a people who had the oracles of God in their hands from committing so black a

crime. But when God saw that they were bent on their ruin, they got their desire.

It is said of their forefathers that He granted their request and sent leanness into their souls. When Israel rejected the counsel of God He gave them up to the counsel and lust of their own depraved hearts. And a greater curse a man cannot get than his own sinful will. The Jews got a curse with a vengeance when they got Barabbas instead of Christ. And sinners that enjoy the light of the Gospel and hear wholesome doctrine for their souls cannot get a greater judgment than that the providence of God would lock them up from these benefits, and give them up to their own ways. The providence of God might raise up something to keep from a man a bad wife, a large farm, or a dangerous post. If, after all, he pursues his own plans he may succeed, but it is at the expense of his happiness and peace of mind. An ungodly wife will embitter all his days, a large farm will distract his mind with carking cares, and a dangerous post will expose him to many sins. And by preferring Barabbas to Christ he may please himself for a minute, but he offends his Creator and loses his soul. These are alarming thoughts, but they are searching and wholesome truths. We are deceived if we suppose that no man can prefer Barabbas to Christ but the ancient Jews. The unlucky exchange is still going on. The Apostle assures us that these things are writ for our example, either to avoid or follow, as we learn in the 10th of 1st Corinthians, and if we prefer Barabbas, we are always sure to crucify the cause of Christ. So did the Jews, and so must we in like manner. Pilate scourged Him, and then gave Him up to be crucified. In poor Pilate we have an emblem of sinners to this day. Every man that does wrong contrary to his better judgment is acting such another part as Pilate did upon a smaller scale.

Verses 27, 28.—“Then the soldiers of the Governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe.”

The sufferings of the Saviour now began to thicken and come upon Him sevenfold. He stood in our room, and our sins took hold upon Him. Sin brings shame, and as He stood our sponsor, has suffered shame for our sakes. In the Saviour just now we may see what we had deserved. Sin robbed us of our innocence, and took away the image of God. The Saviour is stript of His clothes, and covered with a scarlet robe. This was done by way of derision, to mock Him in His kingly office. And the sinner may see by this what he has cause to expect unless he repents and forsake his sins. The sinner expects happiness in the gratification of his vicious

desires. Instead of enjoying happiness, he meets with misery. Our Lord is here treated as a sinner by the just judgments of God, for He was our surety. He is therefor mocked, and they add insult to cruelty, as if they had said, "You called yourself the King of the Jews, and Kings should wear scarlet or purple and fine linen." And thus devils will hereafter insult the misery of the poor wretches whom they have deceived to their ruin. You expected to be as gods upon earth by having your own will and rejecting the will of your Maker. You now see your fatal mistake. You are robbed of the garment of your innocence, and you will now be clothed with the robes of fire and brimstone; and this is what you get by gratifying your passions and seeking your happiness in the perishing pleasures of sense. And as our Lord is made a spectacle of derision to cruel soldiers, sinners will be objects of scorn to cruel devils; and as they cannot carry it as the Saviour did, they must sink under their sorrows. This is the wages of sin.

Verses 29, 30, 31.—"And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand, and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him."

In the Roman soldiers we see what our sin can do. We are surprised and even shocked at such injustice, cruelty, and barbarity. But if we examine our hearts there is in every child of Adam a principle that would crucify and insult Christ. Our sins were the instruments in the hands of these wicked men. Let us calmly consider this. Sin still insults and crucifies Him. Perhaps we think that if we witnessed the scene upon Calvary Hill we would have no hand in such a wicked tragedy. A young person, a stranger to his own heart, before he has tasted the pleasures of sin, is shocked at the character of the libertine, and prostitute, the thief, the villain, the robber, and the murderer; but in a few years he becomes as bad himself; and if we had lived then we do not know what we would do. But let us ask a question. The people that mocked and murdered Christ were His professed enemies. We are His professed friends. They bowed the knee and mocked Him. We worship in His house as His friends and people. These people, after bowing their knees, spat on Him, abused and crucified Him. And if we break His laws, profane His Sabbaths, and mock His people, are we not much worse than the Jews and Romans? They were enemies, and we call our-

selves His friends. Now, the question we may naturally ask is this, "Which act the most consistent part?" We leave your consciences to answer. And the answer you must give will condemn you if you are guilty of these or worse sins.

Verse 32.—"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear His cross."

The evangelists, Luke and John, inform us that our Lord Himself carried His cross. It seems the loss of blood, and the anguish of His sufferings by scourging, was such that they compel another man that met them to carry the cross after Him. We are called upon now to witness a wonderful and a moving scene. Behold the meek Lamb of God carrying His cross. You have heard the other day of deep and unsearchable providences. What would one of the glorious spirits that surround the throne, a being of a most comprehensive mind, think of this astonishing sight? He saw the Son of God led to carry the instrument of His suffering, like a criminal, to the place of execution. What would he say of such a dark providence till it was explained? The man that carried the cross after Him is a picture of us. He was compelled to carry the cross. Perhaps you say, had you been there, that you would carry the cross altogether, to free Him of the heavy burden. But, alas! are you not always almost compelled to carry the cross after Him? Are you willing to take trouble, for this is to drink of His cup, and to carry His cross; Alas! we are not, and it takes us some time before we cheerfully submit to carry our burden—the cross, whatever it is, is a burden, and we are desired to carry our burden to the Lord and cast it upon Him; and though the cross be bitter, the fruits of this tree are wholesome and sweet. Every Christian must have less or more of it, and we ought to leave this to the Man who has the management of the wheels of providence. And though the flesh may rebel at first, let us yield to carrying it meekly after Christ. If we commit our cause to God as Christ did, He will manage it for us. The cross will prepare us for the Christian's Heavenly Crown.

And now, having mixed so many practical observations in the body of the lecture, I conclude it with the following useful, practical remarks that we ought to view the history, and especially the sufferings, of Christ with an eye of faith. This is not a dry, speculative observation. It is the life and marrow of the Gospel. Christ's suffering for our sins is the strongest argument to hate and forsake sin. When we consider the Gospel in this view it becomes a precious and a consolatory doctrine. It is the foundation of all our hopes, and

the source of all our joys. And this throws light upon the darkest providence that ever mankind witnessed. We see a precious, poor Man ill-used, bought and sold, spat upon, scourged, crucified and slain. But He rises again, ascends to Heaven, assumes all power, gives efficacy to His Gospel, rules as King, and will reign through all eternity. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MARK xiii. 32-33

MARK xiii., 32, 33.—“But of that day,” etc. II. Peter iii. 10, 11.—“But the day of the Lord,” etc.

Among the many arguments which ministers of the Gospel might use in order to bring sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to serve the living God, there is one, namely, the pleasure attending the practice of religion and virtue, and the pangs and anguish of spirit which sinners endure in the ways of vice. And though no sinner is so entirely hardened as not to have thoughts now and then of the future reckoning, and though the charms of virtue and the beauties of holiness cannot captivate the callous hearts of sinners, there is an argument in the words of the text sufficient to strike the hardest heart. The doctrine of a future judgment made even Felix to tremble, and it has made many sinners to tremble since his time. The doctrine of the future judgment is calculated to rouse our fear and stimulate us to flee from the wrath to come. There is a day coming in which all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and receive sentence according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. In the words we may observe the following heads:—

I.—That an infinitely wise God conceals from us those points which are not necessary, and has revealed to us those which are necessary to salvation.

II.—That there will be a future judgment.

III.—That therefore we ought to take heed, watch and pray, and lead a holy and godly life.

I. An infinitely wise God conceals from us those points which are not necessary, and has only revealed to us those which are necessary to salvation. Secret things belong to God, and in our present state are not necessary for us to know. Our Saviour did not answer questions of curiosity. To reveal to us what our curiosity would wish to know would do us more hurt than good. And with respect to individuals, if they were to know beforehand all the success they would meet with it would puff them up, and they would lose the relish of the bless-

ing by anticipation. And if people would see all the troubles through which they must pass they would despond and even turn useless. And for this cause the day of our death is wisely concealed, that we may be always preparing ourselves, and while we view death at some distance, though this gives us concern, it does not throw us into despair. And though the assurance of their salvation is granted to some few of the people of God, it is not ordinarily granted; but after a course of self-denial, after many ardent prayers for the precious blessing, and many struggles against sin and Satan. But He has revealed to us the necessary doctrines of faith and repentance, and that holiness which is the characteristic of the true Christian. There are several things which our foolish curiosity makes us sometimes very anxious to know, and even should we know, it might do us hurt, and could do no good. People often wish to know where their friends went after death, and when they see them in their dreams they are ready to ask them several questions. But if we were to suppose that God would gratify people occasionally so far as to send a heavenly messenger to acquaint them that their friends are happy, would this silence the suggestions of unbelief? If people do not believe Moses and the Prophets, would they believe such authority? God, therefore, wisely and mercifully conceals such things from us, and sends us to the law and to the testimony. He informs us it shall be well with the righteous, and that if we sow to the Spirit we also shall reap everlasting life. If our friend was a blessed and a good man, we need have no fear about him, for Scripture is clear that such characters enter into everlasting rest. Our great work is to follow the example of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. He has revealed to us what is sufficient to instruct in the way of salvation. The Gospel reveals a Saviour and the way that leads to everlasting happiness. He has revealed one great truth, viz.—

II. There will be a future judgment. One of the great points we profess to believe is that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And if the belief of this doctrine sufficiently influenced us, how insignificant would other things be to us in comparison. And as our blessed Saviour and His holy Apostles have revealed this great truth to us, we shall lay before you some arguments from reason and Scripture that prove the doctrine.

1. The light of nature and the general consent of mankind are vouchers for this truth. The heathen world, amidst all their corruption and idolatry, believed in a future state. As they were not blessed with a revelation from Heaven, it was no surprise they should sometimes seem

to doubt the truth. The light of nature gave them a general idea of right and wrong, and as conscience, as the Apostle expresses it, accused or excused them, they concluded there would be a future state of rewards and punishment. Conscience is God's vice-regent in the breast. It told people their doom. And this was a general opinion among mankind. Idolatry proves the being of a God, and the general and universal voice of conscience, even the most erroneous consciences among the benighted pagans, prove the future judgment. The beautiful fictions and the agreeable fables of their poets, as well as the solid and judicious arguments of their philosophers, all concur in establishing this great point. And surely we may be permitted to say that it is not consistent with the goodness of God to permit all mankind from the beginning of the world, from the first origin of history, to be an error. In every place, in every climate, under every religion and form of government, whether among the darkest savages or most enlightened philosophers, all mankind agree that there is a God, and that He will call His creatures to account for their behaviour in this world. The formality of an oath was sacred among heathens, Jews and Christians. Now, an appeal to Almighty God has no meaning if there is not a future state. I conclude, therefore, that an opinion which all mankind in general believe must necessarily be true and infallible.

2. Again, we may appeal to the voice of conscience in every individual under heaven. The most hardened have their seasons of conviction now and then. It is true we read of a seared conscience, and of people that are hardened in sin. This, however, is not an argument against the truth of the doctrine. We have read and heard of people who seemed to be past all feeling, that trembled at the idea of death. Athiests that laughed at religion have been known to hide themselves in time of dreadful thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. Infidels have been known to tremble and cry in time of storm at sea. And it can easily be proved that wicked people, who ridiculed religion and religious persons over their *bowl*, when in great sickness, and in the near view of the awful realities of eternity, have sent for them and begged earnestly for the assistance of their prayers. Conscience may be made the prisoner of unrighteousness, but when asked to declare the truth will acknowledge the future judgment. There are forbodings of futurity in every heart, or something after death gives them uneasiness and concern. And whence all this? Is it the effect of superstition and the prejudice of weak minds? It is not, for men of all ranks and persons of the greatest intellectual abilities know the meaning of those qualms. Good men have often been afraid of the judgment,

and it is certain that the wicked, notwithstanding all that they can do to stifle such thoughts, are no strangers to great fears about eternity. Dissipation, luxury, and lewdness may, as it were, chock conscience for a while. Company and amusement of various kinds may serve them as a screen between them and their own thoughts. Seriousness will, notwithstanding, intrude upon them now and then, and the several instances of mortality to which they are witnesses will, in spite of them, make room for thoughts of eternity. The thoughts exist after death, for matter cannot reason or think, and though people wish to believe contrary, the soul survives the death of the body, and must be miserable or happy for ever.

3. In the next place, we may observe several things in the economy and conduct of Providence that prove the doctrine. We see vice flourish and triumph very often, and the righteous pine and languish in obscurity. Wickedness very often carries everything before it with a high hand. Well-laid schemes of iniquity very often are carried into effect. Everything succeeds to their wish. Bad men thrive in the world, their children prosper, their schemes succeed, they increase in riches, live to old age, and die in the midst of riches and honour. They have a sumptuous burial, and their children, friends and flatterers speak well of them after death. The child of God lives in poverty, struggles with adversity and trouble, meets with disappointment after disappointment. His virtue is despised, his character traduced, and his person injured and oppressed. He cannot appeal to men, for his oppressors are powerful. Virtue and innocence cannot defend him. As he has not money or interest, or friends, and argument and commonsense are not heard in his defence, he yields to the storm, and is crushed by his enemies. Are these thoughts the flight of fancy; are they not rather obvious observations. Do we not often see them realised in human life? It is generally believed that there are no such animals in nature as speculative atheists. And as all men believe the being of a God, must we not therefore conclude that these things will be put right hereafter? Does not reason say that it will be well with the righteous, and conscience will naturally prophecy terror to the wicked?

4. And this is further verified from every view we may take of the attributes of God. He is a holy and pure agent, and a true God. Mankind cannot esteem a man "the leading feature of whose character is mere silliness and over-much good nature." Such a man exposes himself to injury and contempt. He is likewise an enemy to virtue and moral goodness. His indolent and cowardly turn of mind make him overlook virtue, and indulge what he ought severely to punish.

As such a man justly exposes himself to contempt, the unfeeling tyrant who oppresses his fellow-creatures and punishes the slightest faults with a brutal cruelty, is a constant object of horror. Justice in God, though a terrible attribute to the wicked, is nevertheless essential to His holy nature. Reason as well as Scripture says that the Judge of all the earth will act right. It is our mercy in this happy country to have the Gospel in its purity. We have likewise a degree of liberty that may excite the envy of surrounding nations. One of the best effects of our liberty is a trial by jury. In this case, whether the person before them is condemned or acquitted, mankind believe that he is justly condemned or acquitted? And if justice is thus impartially distributed in Britain, may we not believe that it will be so before the highest tribunal. As to those who are acquitted, they asked pardon of their Judge, and made their peace in time. As to the wicked, they can have no objection to the witnesses or to the jury that will sit upon them. The great witness will be the conscience of every individual. As to many of their actions, the wicked will be witnesses against one another, and no action will be condemned without proof. The jury will be the people of God, and to them they can have no objection: they were their friends and acquaintances, and often endeavoured to reclaim them, and this leads—

5. To Scripture to prove the doctrine. Several heathen philosophers could reason with great strength and beauty about the mortality of the soul and a future state. The light of reason and the law of nature might show them proper notions of right and wrong. They speak with great propriety of the consolation of a good conscience, and the terrors of a guilty one. And as they believed the being of a God, it was natural for them to consign different mansions to good and bad men in a future state. But as they had not revelation to direct them, it was no wonder though some doubts might remain upon their minds now as they saw some things in the conduct of Providence which they could not account for. This staggered the faith of the Psalmist himself, till he had recourse to the Word of God to calm his passions and to satisfy his mind. But, blessed be God, we have a light to direct us which the heathen had not, and a greater and clearer light than the Psalmist had. We have no doubt about a future state, and can have none when we consult the Word. I shall select a few passages which may serve for many.

Matthew xxv., 31, 32—“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be

gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”

I. Thess. iv., 16—“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

Rev. xx., 11, 12—“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Compared with Daniel vii., 9 and 10—“The Lord Jesus at the end of the world shall descend from heaven, and the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet of God shall raise the dead out of their graves. Those who have slept for ages and generations shall come forth, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. The Son of God shall sit upon a great white throne, and before Him shall appear all nations.”

This will be the greatest sight that ever mankind saw—the Judge upon the throne, and the fate of every individual of the human race to be determined. We read of great conquerors leading almost innumerable armies, and of many bloody battles, where many thousands and ten thousands were slain. But what are these thousands and millions in comparison to all the race of Adam ? Take notice, my friends, of the astonishing scene which Scripture opens up to your view. The God of Glory descends in the human nature from heaven. He comes attended with an innumerable company of angels. The elements melt with fervent heat, the stars fall from their orbs, all things are to be changed, for there is to be a new heaven and a new earth. The great trumpet sounds, and those who sleep in their graves obey the great summons. See what a glorious sight. The bodies of the saints are made like the glorious body of the Son of God Himself. They appear like so many stars of light. Their bodies are spiritual, and they rise with them in the air to meet their Redeemer and sing His praises. The wicked rise next. Their bodies are deformed with sin, their souls are swarming with their lusts and trembling with guilt. Their souls and bodies unite. And, O ! how miserable their meeting. They rise to shame and contempt. They appear naked before their Judge. The books then are opened. The book of life is opened, which contains the names of all the people of God. The book of God’s remembrance is

also opened. There are recorded all the good deeds, private and public, of the saints. The very cup of cold water is not forgot, and every word spoken in favour of virtue and religion, as well as their private prayers, are mentioned. The advices they gave to sinners in order to reclaim them are set down in legible characters. Actions which they themselves forgot are registered in the records of Heaven, and are now made public before the innumerable hosts that are assembled. Their sinful actions are blotted out, and their souls are washed so that they appear without spot or blemish. Who shall now lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who shall condemn? They came in time, and availed themselves of the pardon that was offered. They are now invited to partake of the joy of the Lord, and possess the Kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. The wicked appear next, dismayed with guilt and overwhelmed with sin. They are ugly spectacles, for their bodies rise foul, just as they were laid down. We read in Malachi iii. 16, that there is a book of remembrance in which the good deeds of the saints are registered. We likewise read in Rev. xx. 12, that the dead were judged out of things that were written in the books, according to their works. So that it seems there is an awful book of remembrance for the wicked. Their wicked deeds are produced, and likewise their neglect of works of piety, necessity, and mercy. The Judge is all-knowing, and all their actions are produced, and they cannot deny them. Many of their wicked actions were known to one another, and none of their actions are concealed from the Judge. Conscience and the book of God will agree in many points. The Apostle Jude has a very remarkable expression in verses 14 and 16—"The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts." The Judge of all the earth will condemn none without proof. We find here that He will first convince ungodly sinners. People now think little of being ungodly. They may live with reputation in the world, and have no fear of God before their eyes. But the language of the Holy Ghost shows what will be their fate. And we find that He takes particular notice of the hard speeches of ungodly sinners against Him. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" is the language of Christ from Heaven to a man that destroyed His Church upon earth. And when the sentence is pronounced against them, though they now despise to bow their knee, they must bow then, for God informs

us in His Word that every knee must bow to Him. They are driven then from His presence into everlasting punishment. The glorious Redeemer, now with His elect, take possession of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are now happy to the utmost of their wishes. And this leads me to the third thing.

III. That we ought to take heed, watch and pray, and lead a holy and godly life. This is the use or inference which our Lord makes from the doctrine. We are all concerned in it. The most important news that ever was heard, the most important events that can happen in the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, can only affect a certain portion of mankind. If a battle is fought, the fate of which is big with the most important events to a whole kingdom, a stranger may be passing by, and from the top of an eminence he may be an unconcerned spectator. When he hears the news he hastens home to his own country, and is not in the least affected with the consequences. A man may see a navy dashed to pieces with a tempest, and himself be safe on land. But it cannot be that an individual of the human race can look at a distance at the general judgment and be an unconcerned spectator. We are, therefore, first, to take heed and watch over our hearts and lives. The word in the original is "Look." We ought to look if the work of God is upon the heart, and to watch over it.

1. As to vain thoughts (Jer. iv. 14). Many of our thoughts, at first view, seem at least indifferent, but all our thoughts tend to something, and if we watch we find to what they tend. They either lead us to holy meditation or to something that is foolish and sinful.

2. We must watch against sinful thoughts, to stifle them; and when they rise, lest they proceed to sinful deeds. We must watch over ourselves, lest sin enters unawares.

3. And especially we are to guard against the sin that easily besets us.

(2) We are earnestly to pray to God, because experience may teach us that our own endeavours are not sufficient, as prayer without watching is presumption; watching without prayer is foolish and impious. If we would thrive as Christians we must have both. And our Saviour gives us another receipt, to be used upon occasions, namely, fasting, and a three-fold cord is not easily broken. Watching, fasting and prayer is a cord all the powers of darkness cannot break.

(3) We are to lead a godly and a holy life. A holy and a godly life is what will prepare us for the judgment and enable us to look up to heaven without terror. The great day of God's wrath will make the stoutest heart to tremble if found a sinner. The earth and all the works that are therein will be

burnt up, and the very elements melt with fervent heat. The unclean heart and the unholy conversation and ungodly life will then be dreadful companions. A conscience sprinkled with the blood of the Great High Priest, and a life consecrated to His service, is what will secure us against that day. Let us take heed, then; let us look. Our Saviour says the tree must be good before it can yield good fruit; and if it does not yield good fruit it is cut down and cast into the fire. Let us then give the heart to Himself to sanctify it. Let us believe this doctrine, and live under the influence of it.

IMPROVEMENT.

The application or improvement of the doctrine is:— The first flood that destroyed the world was a flood of water. The second will be of fire. As none then were saved but those who went into the ark, none can then escape but such as flee to Christ. Now is the time; now is the day of salvation. Come in time, for after death there is the judgment.

God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On II. CORINTHIANS vi. 2

II. COR. vi. 2.—“Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.”

In the verse immediately preceding the text the Apostle shows us the duty of ministers and the spirit of the Gospel. They are helpers together with God in the great work of bringing sinners to the Saviour. And they are to do this, not by force and compulsion, not by fire and sword, but by the cords of love and hands of a Man. Reason and argument, exhortation and doctrine, are the great weapons we are to use, and we are to look to Himself for a blessing. One of the arguments to be used are in the text, namely, the accepted time and day of salvation. The words are cited from Isaiah. Christ had an accepted time for working the great salvation. We have ours likewise, and we should take concern and improve our precious time and our precious opportunities.

I. The present time is the accepted time and day of salvation.

II. Lay before you some arguments to improve this precious season.

I. The present time is the accepted time and day of salvation. And this is true both with respect to God, our Maker, and with respect to ourselves.

1. As to God our Maker, we know that He declares in His Word that He hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, and if He had he could very easily cut him off in a moment. He delays him, then, and gives him time to repent; and if he improves this time happy shall it be for him, and his conversion shall occasion joy to the angels of God. The work He gave us to do is the salvation of our souls, and the great duties He requires of us are faith and repentance. The time for this work is during this present life. This is God's accepted time, and it will prove a day of salvation to ourselves if we make good use of it and improve our season. It will be an acceptable thing to God that we attempt to obey His revealed will and call upon Him while He is near.

2. The present time will likewise prove an acceptable time to ourselves if we improve it as we ought. Everything is beautiful in its season. Spring is the time for sowing the seed, and harvest for gathering the corn into the barn. Winter is an improper season for either, and he that would delay his work till then will lose his pains. If we begin while in this uncertain state of probation to seek God we shall find Him. Let us seek Him, then, with all our heart. If we forsake sin and apply to the blood of sprinkling we may get our sins washed away. Faith, which is the work of the Spirit of God, will enable us to lay our burden upon the Saviour, and to subdue the power and the love of sin. Let us apply, then, in time for this faith, for He says, "Ask and ye shall receive." But if we delay the work till the winter of death, it will be disagreeable to ourselves, and, for aught we know, it may be disagreeable to God also. He may then say, "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." And this will still further appear if we consider the things to which our time is compared, and the similitudes which the Holy Spirit makes use of to show the shortness of time, and consequently that we ought to make a good use of it.

(1) It is compared to seed time, and this we heard already. This seed time is short; but if we do not sow we cannot expect to reap. And if we would reap to everlasting life we are to sow to the Spirit.

(2) It is compared to a day. Now, if the hireling does not work in the day he cannot expect his reward. He will not obtain meat and wages at night. Much, however, may depend upon what a hireling works in one day. If he does a great deal and faithfully performs his task his master's interest is secured, and it may be a happy means of procuring a livelihood for him by recommending him as a very good servant.

(3) It is compared to a shuttle, and though this is rapid, still more rapid is the flight of time.

(4) It is compared to a post (Job ix. 25). The word in the original is "runner." The post is obliged sometimes to travel day and night, especially if he carries letters that require great dispatch. Perhaps a great deal depends upon the news he brings and the time he arrives. He must embrace the present opportunity, because if he loiters away his time the consequence may be hurtful to himself and to his employer.

(5) It is compared to an eagle hastening after its prey. The flight of the eagle is naturally swift, especially when hunger drives her. She sees her prey before her, and seizes it, as it were, with the quickness of lightning. And though her motion is quick, she may require it altogether. If she

does not seize her prey, now that it is before her, she may not get again such another opportunity. With such eagerness should we embrace every season and opportunity to promote our salvation.

(6) It is compared to ships. The motion of a ship is very swift. She may have a very valuable cargo. The people who manage her, then, are to embrace the proper time for coming home; they must study the wind and the tide. And when the ship sails before the wind with a brisk gale, she goes at an exceeding good rate. And if she sees herself in danger of being pursued and overtaken by pirates, she crowds all her sails, and they gave her all that she can carry. Such is the flight of time, and in this short time we have a great deal of work upon our hands. And should we not also, like a swift ship in danger of being taken, fly with speed to a safe harbour where we may ride at anchor.

(7) Lastly, it is compared to a span. Our life is but a span; and, indeed, when the oldest man takes a retrospective view of what is past, he may say, "Few and evil have been the days of my life. All is vanity."

II. The next thing proposed was to lay before you some arguments to improve this precious season.

There are some things that are reckoned very precious according to the value which mankind sets upon them. Thus we call gold and silver precious metals, and we speak of jewels and precious stones. A small quantity of these precious metals, or of these valuable jewels, would buy a great quantity of other things. How small is the quantity of gold or of diamonds that would buy a very large estate? How precious, then, is time. A small portion of it may be blest to our souls, and it may procure for us all the blessings of a happy eternity. People that place their happiness in wealth would gather the smallest grain of gold. They treasure up the gold dust and preserve it as they would preserve their own lives. And in this manner should we improve every part and portion of our precious time.

(1) Our improvement or abuse of time is connected with our everlasting happiness or misery. Ask at a death-bed; ask the inhabitants of the invisible regions what is the value and import of time. All the emphasis of language cannot describe the misery of the wicked, and even imagination itself cannot form an idea of the joys of the righteous.

And does not this clearly demonstrate the value of time? The wicked are miserable because they squandered away the talent that God put in their hand. He gave them reason and judgment, appointed their lot in a land of light, and gave them

offers for several years of the great salvation. This they slighted time after time for the empty vanities, the profits, and the pleasures of this life. With Esau they despised this valuable birthright, and sold heaven for a mouthful of pleasure. They see their folly when it is too late, and now their late repentance will avail them nothing. They weep and bewail their own folly, and now eternity will not throw back a few years or months, or even a few weeks or days, to allow them time to make up their peace with God. O, that sinners would consider this in time. The song of the saints in light will show you the value of time. It was their chief study to seek and secure the favour of God. They turned from their sins, subdued their unruly passions, and earnestly entreated at a throne of mercy for grace to restore the Divine image and expel the malignant poison of sin from their souls. They came in time; they were accepted, justified, sanctified and finally saved. Instead of squandering away their precious moments and minutes in sinful pursuits or idle diversions, they dedicated them to God and to some useful and edifying employment. They made the improvement of the mind the main business. They embraced every opportunity to secure their salvation, and to promote the peace and purity of their own minds. They did sow to the Spirit, and now they reap everlasting life.

(2) Much of our time is already past. At whatever stage we are arrived, this may be said with truth with respect to many. Few of mankind arrive at old age, and if a man dies at sixty or seventy, the most of his time is past at forty; and if we have passed the days of our youth the most precious part of our time is gone. This is the morning of the day, and the morning is past with the most of us, and what have we for what is past, what good account can we give of it, as we reckon upon it in general that the most of our time is past, and what remains short and uncertain? Reason, as well as Scripture, will inform us that we ought to double our diligence, and work while we have the day, because when the night arrives none can work. We spent already so much of our time in vanity and sin, so much in folly and diversion, so much in sleep, so much in childhood, and, alas, how little have we dedicated to the great work of our salvation of what is already past.

(3) Another argument is the danger of vicious habits, and how short our time is for conquering them. Have you gone on in a course of sin, and has your darling vice taken strong hold of the affections of your soul? Consider your misery if you die in this state. Sin must be subdued, or you must be miserable. You cannot conquer it yourself; and do you now neglect the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, and how short your time is for improving them. To-day, if you will

hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Your time in this world is the time of God's long suffering. The antediluvian world misimproved this precious time, while Noah was preaching repentance to them. They were, therefore, swept away with a flood. And death will sweep away all your refuge of lies if you do not improve the time of your visitation. And when the short time of your probation passes, whether you are prepared or not, die you must, and appear naked before the judgment to give an account of what you have done.

(4) The loss is awful. If we do not improve time, all is lost. If time is lost, the soul is lost, God is lost, Heaven is lost, happiness is lost. In this world, though a man would suffer a considerable loss, yet after all his main interest may be secure, and he may still do well. Consider in this case that it is not a small or inconsiderable loss that you will sustain at death if time is lost, because it cannot be made up to us. A man in this same world is in miserable circumstances if he loses all that he has of the world and is reduced to poverty and want. This, however, might happen without his fault, and it has happened that a man rose in the world after being reduced to such pitiable circumstances. But if you lose your all at death, it cannot happen without your own fault, and the loss can never be retrieved. There is a great gulf fixed. Men are then in the same situation with the devils, without hope. And this shows you the inconceivable value of time.

(5) We must give an account of time. It is not our own : it is only a talent entrusted to us. We should husband it well. People consider their time as their own, and that they may use it as they please. This is a fatal mistake. If we were to suppose that a rich man sends a ship laden with valuable goods, and that he gives a sum of money to the captain of the vessel and orders him to bring from a foreign country goods that will sell to great advantage in this country; if the person to whom such a vessel was entrusted squander the goods and drink the money, and bring home the vessel without a cargo, or full of trifling toys that are not fit for sale, does not such a man deserve exemplary punishment ? How much more will the sinner's folly appear when he appears naked and is asked what use he made of his time ? Has he procured grace for his soul and the Divine Image, or is he only full of sin and pollution ? Will he not appear speechless, and be ordered to outer darkness as his portion ?

(6) Lastly—At death people will see their own folly if they do not improve time. Thousands have wished at death for one week to make up their peace with God and repent. Abused opportunities, misspent Sabbaths, and lost, neglected time will sit heavy upon the soul at death. People may live

fools, but cannot die fools. They then begin to think seriously. O, for a little time to think of our state and make up matters between God and our souls. Eternity, with all its awful realities, begin to open upon our view. Unfit to live and unwilling to die, their consciences full of guilt, their souls full of terror, they begin, perhaps, to pray. Their hearts misgive them, their petitions falter upon their lips. They despised and neglected prayer; religion was not in all their thoughts. If now a few short years were bestowed upon them to work out their salvation, O, how they would improve time ! But is it not probable that these deathbed wishes may be all in vain ? God sees that they would relapse, and by sparing them longer that they would aggravate their own condemnation. Is it not likely that the awful Scripture threatening shall be put in execution ? “Because when I called ye did not answer, I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” And though we should suppose the best even that God would grant—a deathbed repentance to the sinner—even then his soul would be in deep anguish, and he might die with little comfort. And his death would leave a gloom upon the minds of his friends of religion themselves, who knew the value of time and the worth of a precious and immortal soul. They would be at a loss what to say, whether his repentance was sincere or not, and found acceptance with the Judges. The argument shows the value of time.

APPLICATION.—And now, sinner, to what has been said let me observe—

(1) That the longer your time in the world the more carnal your life and the more negligent of your salvation, the heavier will your punishment be. You neglect now to pray to that God who would hear and answer you. He is now upon a throne of mercy, and is willing to hear and answer all that come to Him through a Mediator. But if you neglect this your season, while the golden sceptre is held forth to you, hereafter you will cry to the rocks and to the mountains and they will not answer. You are now desired to kiss the Son, to obey His Gospel and believe in His Name. If you do so you shall be saved, and this is the proper season for the work. Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. You should work while you have the day, for when the night of death comes no man can work. As the tree falleth it must lie, and if you die in your sins you will have a dreadful resurrection and a miserable eternity.

(2) You have misspent your time in what is past. You are not therefore to despair. Be prevailed upon now to re-

deem it. The time past is more than enough to have wrought the will of the flesh and of the enemy of your souls. Unbelief may suggest the awful thoughts that the time is already past, and that He will not now receive you; that it is in vain for you to think of returning to God. Beware of such a thought. It is from hell, and you ought to stifle it in the birth, for the declaration of Scripture is that He hath no pleasure in the sinner's death, and though your sins were as scarlet, and of the colour of crimson, they shall be white as snow. The Gospel encourages you to go to the Saviour, and through Him to make up your peace with God. You should ask Him with all your heart. He is able and willing to save. Perhaps you think that you do not see your need, and this keeps you back, because only the sick prize a physician. But remember that Himself tells you He came to call sinners to repentance, and He is exalted to give repentance to sinners. Be prevailed upon to apply to Him as you are, even when you do not find the Spirit at work in your soul. And remember this is the greatest duty to which you are called—to trust the Lord Jesus with your everlasting salvation. Scripture tells you He is God and Man. He asks you now, as He asked the poor man formerly, "Do you believe that I am able to do this for you?" Endeavour to say, "Yes." He is now passing by in the Gospel ordinances. Call upon Him to open your eyes and save your souls.

God bless His Word. Amen.

LECTURE

On JOHN iii. 3

JOHN iii. 3—"Jesus answered him and said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'"

Our Lord was the great Teacher sent from God. His doctrine was like Himself, without blemish and without spot. Philosophers tell us there are spots in the sun, but there are none in the Word. The Teacher who spake as never man did left with His followers a wholesome system both of Divinity and morals. His doctrine of Divinity was wonderful, and nothing can be so pleasant to the sons of men. God was manifest in the flesh and dwelt among us. He redeemed us by His blood, and calls us to partake of His glory. The morality is so pure that it does not allow the smallest sin. At the same time that His doctrine is full of comfort to the penitent, it is also full of terror to the workers of iniquity. It informs us of the nature of our disease, and graciously points out to us the remedy. Our disease is of a deadly nature, and our cure must come from heaven. Doctrine—We must experience a divine change before we can see the Kingdom of God.

- I.—I shall explain and prove the doctrine of regeneration by several arguments from Scripture.
- II.—Connections between this spiritual birth and a future state of happiness.
- III.—The impossibility of a sinner in his sin to enter the Kingdom of God.
- IV.—Give some directions to such of my hearers as wish to experience this saving change upon their souls.
- V.—Application—(1) Comfort; (2) Terror; (3) Advice.

I.—I shall prove the doctrine by several arguments, and in doing this I shall endeavour to explain the nature of this heavenly birth by giving marks from Scripture. (2) Show the connection of this spiritual birth with a future state of happiness. (3) The impossibility of a sinner being admitted in his sins to the Kingdom of God. Scripture is clear that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And His Word likewise

informs us that we are born in sin, and by nature dead in trespasses and sin, without spiritual life and feeling. The first mark, then, we can give of any birth, natural and spiritual, is life, feeling and motion. Let the life never be so weak, we are sure that there is life when there is feeling or motion in the smallest degree. The motion of an infant is very weak, but he has feeling, and he proves his life by his cry. The motion of an infant may be very weak, but his cry may be strong. Grace at first is tender, like the smoking flax and broken reed. Though an infant cannot speak, he shows that he has a desire after something, and when he gets that he is satisfied. If an infant gets anything to give him pain, he cries, and if he wants the breast he cries; and if he feels happy he smiles. When the spiritual child is born, he feels that something pains him. He drank of the fatal cup of sin—his stomach is sick, his conscience is sore. He cries to heaven—"Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." He feels a want; he cries for grace. The character the Scripture gives of Paul, after his conversion, is "Behold he prayeth." When a child is born he cries, and we used to thank God for a living mother and a living child. All the children of God are crying children; they pray. And when a child is satisfied, he smiles, though he cannot speak. Now, when a child of God cries to himself and gets comfort either in private prayer or in the public ordinance of religion, he has a happiness beyond what the pleasures of sin and Satan can give. Again, a child may be pleased for a minute with a toy that is put in his hand, but if he has a desire for the breast, nothing else can satisfy in the place of it. And though a true Christian may be taken up occasionally with the things of this life, he soon finds they cannot satisfy him, as he has a desire for something else.

And as there is life and feeling, there is likewise motion in the spiritual birth. As the child grows he gathers strength, and begins first to crawl, then to walk, and at last to run. The Christian runs on his way, face towards Zion; he runs the way of God's commandments, and though his steps are sometimes heavy and his motion slow, owing to many things that retard his journey, still he is in the way, and does not go back to seek his satisfaction in the ways of sin in his heavenly motion. Refreshed and strengthened, however, by motives from the Word, he recovers himself and goes forward.

(2) Again, there is a likeness in the children of one family by which they are known and distinguished from others. There are two great families, and the Saviour distinguishes them in this way, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. There is a family likeness in the children of the flesh: they seek their happiness

in earthly gratifications. They that are born from above seek happiness in spiritual objects. Every creature that is brought into the world seeks the food prepared for its own nature. The sheep and the ox go to the pastures of the field, and feed upon straw and hay. The wolf and the lion delight in blood and carnage. Birds of the air feed, some upon flies and insects and worms, and others upon berries and other vegetables. And every creature feeds upon what is suitable to their own nature. And in the great family who live according to the course of this world, some feed upon one vanity and some upon another. Those who are born from above have a family likeness, and all have a relish for one particular food. They are renewed in the spirit of their mind. They are made like unto God in holiness, and unto their elder Brother, the Lord Jesus. Every one has a near or a distant resemblance to the Saviour, according to the progress they have made in holiness. They find their food in the Word. As sheep and kine find food in the green pastures near the still waters, the sheep of the Saviour find pasture in the Word. Other people hear the Word and read it, but do not enjoy it as they do. A lion or tiger can see the beauty of a meadow as well as the clean animal that feeds there; but he does not satisfy his hunger with the grass and herb that he sees. Now we shall see in what things this family likeness which is among the children of God consists :—

- (1) In their views of sin and grace.
- (2) In their views of the great essentials of religion.
- (3) In their views of a Saviour.

(1) They have the same views of sin and grace. Let us go from one corner of the globe to the other and we see that the people of God agree in this great opinion, that sin is the poison of their nature, that they come to the world obnoxious to the cause of God, that their souls are defiled. That they cannot be happy, enjoy communion with God, or be admitted into His Kingdom without holiness. The want of holiness is the great want with them, and in this feeling they agree and understand one another perfectly. They agree in their prayers about grace, and make it the subject of their petitions. The language of their spiritual feelings is—"O, wretched man that I am; who will deliver me from this body of death?"—when they find the motions of sin within them. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ," is their song when they obtain any advantage in the spiritual warfare. They believe they would be completely happy if sin was extirpated, and their souls full of the grace of God.

Whatever situation a true Christian can be in, nothing can make him so uneasy or so unhappy as the irregular pro-

pensities of his own heart, and if he has the joys of religion he can be happy in low circumstances, and under afflictions and pressures of various kinds. His light afflictions work for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. From the dungeon to the throne the views of all the people of God entirely correspond respecting the source of their joys and the cause of their greatest afflictions and troubles. They find a fountain of sin in themselves, but they find all their springs of consolation flowing from the fountain of life.

(2) They agree in their views of the great essentials of religion. The children of one family may be in several places, they may differ likewise in their dress and manner of living, but though they may not be known by their dresses, there may be a great likeness in their faces. The children of light do not all dress alike. They have not the same mode of worship or form of Church government. They may likewise have different sentiments with regard to the meaning of some texts of Scripture; but they agree without dispute about the leading doctrines of Christianity and the great truths of the Gospel. They believe in one God, and in one Mediator, and though they cannot comprehend that mystery, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or that delightful truth, God was manifest in the flesh, they believe them as doctrines clearly revealed in Scripture. They believe in the great sacrifice He offered for procuring pardon of sin. They believe the resurrection of the body and a future state. These truths they all agree in, and their belief of them influences their lives and conduct.

(3) They agree in their views of a Saviour. It may indeed be said that this is the great point in which they are of the same mind. The grace of God makes people to prize the Saviour whatever outward form of religion they may be under. People of the same sentiments, when they happen to meet in mixed or in public company, though they had never seen one another before, when they begin to communicate their thoughts, whatever is the subject, they become friends immediately. Men of the same spiritual way of thinking in everything else, when they content themselves merely with a form of religion, agree better and love one another much better than a man of true religion and a mere formalist, though they have the same outward mode of worship. Let us even suppose that a pious Roman Catholic, who has been brought from darkness to light by the Spirit of God, should meet accidentally with a Godly Protestant; neither knows the form of religion the other embraces. Let us now suppose that one of them gives a hint that leads to a discourse about the Saviour. The conversation takes a spiritual turn. They speak of their own different experiences in religion, and entirely

agree that the Lord Jesus is the great object of their trust. Here they agree, and it would be cruel to suppose but there are not Roman Catholics, notwithstanding the idolatry of their Church, who make the Lord Jesus Christ the sole object of their trust for everlasting salvation. Men of all languages and nations are said in Scripture to be redeemed by Him. And notwithstanding the bigotry of many Protestants, as well as Papists, such of them as have the true grace of God agree when they meet, and when they talk only of our Saviour and of what He has done in them and for them, and do not speak of the peculiar tenets of their different sects by which they are distinguished from one another, and from all the world besides, I say while they confine their discourse to the one point of doctrine, Jesus Christ and Him crucified, they not only agree but they love as brethren. They meet in Christ, and as brethren in Him they are one soul and one spirit.

(3) There is a mutual love and attachment between the children of one family. Those who are born from above love God with all their heart, soul and affections. And when they love God they love His people, and love is the fulfilling of the law. This principle of love to God is what we call the new nature. And this new nature is like God. It loves what He loves, and hates what He hates. Love affects the company of the beloved object. Those who are born from above seek communion with God. They delight in His company. "It is good for me," says the Psalmist, "to draw near to God." They delight in every company and in every place where they hear about Him. The Saviour's name is like precious ointment, and it cheers their heavy hearts and brightens their prospects. They love Him on account of His spiritual beauty, as He is God; He is altogether lovely. As He is Man, He is full above measure with the graces of the Holy Spirit. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. His garments, His human nature, have a sweet smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia. They love Him, therefore, as the chiefest among ten thousand and superlatively lovely. And when they see His image they cannot but love it. They love the people of God wherever they meet them. If we were in a distant kingdom we would love them with whom we would find our own country's language. And this often happens. Is it a wonder, then, that those who travel to the same heavenly Canaan delight in the company of those who talk the language of the country? They likewise have pleasure in teaching this heavenly language to such as are willing to learn. They are on their pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, and wish that many would accompany them. They pray that the Kingdom of their Father would come, and they use their

endeavours to bring others over to this kingdom. The new nature that makes them delight in one another makes them to have pleasure in the increase of the great family; not like an earthly possession. The more children a man has, the less he can give them; the more any one of them does of good, and especially the more they turn to righteousness, the more light; they shall shine like the stars for ever and ever.

(4) They who are born from above do the works of the Spirit. Every creature that comes into the world performs the functions that belong to its particular nature. The spiritual birth has actions peculiar to itself. They that are spiritual mind the things of the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit, Scripture informs us, are love, peace, meekness, temperance, purity, righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The Apostle speaks of a course of actions as that which distinguishes those who are in the flesh and those who are in the Spirit. A single action does not fix a man's character, either as a bad man or as a good man. A bad man may perform things that are good and worthy in themselves from very unworthy motives. A good man, by temptation and infirmity, may fall into sin. In these cases neither of them is in his proper element, nor do they walk agreeably to their respective natures. Holiness, or a course of virtuous and righteous actions, is the sun-marks of the children of God. Our Lord Himself says, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and one of His Apostles tells us that every one that has this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure. True Christians are like fresh-water fishes—they leave the sea, swim against the stream, and ascend to the place from whence they had their first origin. Our origin as Christians is from heaven. We leave the sea of this world, and must swim likewise against the stream to come to the place of our birth. If ye are risen with Christ, set your affections upon the things that are above. When our affections are heavenly our actions will naturally be pure and holy. The smallest actions have a dignity stamped upon them when we aim at the glory of God and the good of our fellow-men. The smallest bit of copper, when it has the King's stamp upon it, becomes a valuable coin. A piece of paper, having likewise the King's stamp, may be made worth thousands and ten thousands of gold and silver. Now, if we have the stamp of heaven upon our souls, our actions are valuable in the sight of God. Copper and plain clean paper, without a stamp, have their value, but it is comparatively small. Sobriety, generosity, public spirit, are valuable and useful in themselves; but if people have only an eye to themselves in such actions they cannot be denominated good actions in Scripture accounts. The uniform and constant

character of the Christian is summed up in these few words. They live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. In a word, regeneration is a work of the Spirit of God quickening our dead souls, and stamping the image of the Lord Jesus Christ upon our souls and hearts.

All, therefore, who are like the Lord Jesus are like one another in the great and leading features of true holiness and righteousness. They love God, and this Divine principle makes them love one another. They all imitate the Saviour, whose meat and drink was to do the will of God, and to do good to the souls and bodies of men.

II. I now proceed to show the connection between this spiritual birth and a future state of happiness. Heaven is called the Kingdom of God. Now we know that every kingdom has a language peculiar to itself. It has likewise laws and customs and privileges that distinguish it from other kingdoms and countries. A people going from one kingdom to another, without any knowledge of the language and manners and customs of the inhabitants, will make but an awkward appearance among them. But if we suppose, besides, there is an irreconcilable enmity in the stranger to everything he can meet in the place, must we not say there is a necessity for his changing his peculiar habits and manner of life, and learning the language and adapting himself to the customs of the inhabitants if he would live happy among them. This change, then, is what regeneration effects in all the people of God.

- (1) It removes the natural enmity that is in them to the manners and inhabitants of that holy place.
- (2) It teaches them the language of the Kingdom.
- (3) It habitually prepares them for relishing the pure and rational enjoyment of the Kingdom of God.

(1) It removes the natural enmity that is theirs to the manners and inhabitants of that holy place. Scripture gives us an awful picture of the human heart. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, so that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and the carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject, and cannot be subject, to His law. If this be the language of the Spirit of God, it is clear the mind must become spiritual and holy before it can be admitted into the joys of heaven. It is commonly said that however a person lives that at his death he wishes to be admitted to the joys of heaven; but upon examination it shall be found that this opinion is very ill-founded. A sinner in his sin cannot wish for heaven, for it is a very holy place. Do not the people of God often complain of their unfitness for that place, and their want of relish for its holy enjoyments?

And they do this though the power of sin in some measure has been broken in their souls. Though the pleasures of heaven are beyond thought or language, Scripture gives us a view of the nature of these pleasures. They sing praises to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. They admire the Divine nature, search His works, and sing His praises. Now, we know in fact that people do not naturally take pleasure in such employments. What the people of God reckon a heaven upon earth is to such persons irksome and disagreeable. They weary in a very short time of the duties of religion, because they do not enter into the spirit of them. And when they find and are informed that they must be denied to other pleasures, they fret and show their enmity. And this enmity grows upon them, and the more they indulge in other pleasures the less they can relish the pleasures of holiness. It may be then asked—Is it consistent with truth, or even with common-sense, to suppose that death will make them to relish the pleasures which they hated formerly? What they wish at death is to be free from punishment. This is totally different from a desire or relish for the joys of heaven. Regeneration, on the other hand, gives a new turn to the thoughts. There is a new heart, and the affections are set upon heavenly objects. In consequence of this change the enmity to spiritual things is removed, and the person is reconciled to the duties of religion, and has even a pleasure in resisting every sinful inclination the indulgence of which would take away his spiritual pleasures. Light naturally removes the darkness, and grace as naturally removes an aversion to religion and our enmity to God. Sinners look upon holiness as a confinement, and so it is to their unruly lusts. They hear about heaven as a state of great joy. The saints will admire the Saviour, and sing Hallelujahs for ever and ever. Before we can relish this work, grace must break the power of sin in our souls.

(2) It teaches them the language of the Kingdom. Scripture informs us that men of all languages meet in heaven. We know they are completely happy in that blessed place, and there is one particular language in which they all agree and understand one another. They have then—

- (1) The language of love and kindness.
- (2) The language of wonder and admiration.
- (3) The language of praise and thankfulness.

Now, reason itself as well as Scripture will inform us that there is this universal language in heaven, and both Scripture and reason inform us that we must learn it here, and that without this language we cannot be fit inhabitants of the place.

(1) Regeneration teaches us the language of the Kingdom. It is a language of love. It was customary once for people to go upon a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to visit the Holy Sepulchre and the scene of our Saviour's sufferings. When people of different nations and languages met upon the road, as this was their main business, they would love one another. When one spoke kindly to the other and imparted to him of his worldly substance, he knew that the other talked the language of kindness to him. When the Lord's people meet upon earth, though they are of different language and sentiments in some respects, they love as brethren. They have the same spirit, are upon the same pilgrimage, have the same experiences, the same hopes and fears, and all have an attachment to the same Saviour. This unites them, and the one loves the other the moment they understand that each loves the Saviour.

(2) They talk the language of wonder and admiration. Such as arrive at that happy place see their obligation to Divine grace, and this fills them with wonder. The question, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" may be asked of all that are admitted there. And the burden of their song will be, "Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give the glory." And we may learn some of this language in this present world. Do we not see the course of the multitude? Do not many live as if there was no God or future state, satisfying the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Some are committing uncleanness with greediness, and others gathering wealth as if they were to continue here for ever. The language of many is—"Who will show us any good?" and of others, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And what makes the children of God differ from others, who plucked them as brands from the burning? Grace! grace! And this fills their hearts with love, with wonder, and joy. They are debtors to free grace, and are not a whit better by nature than those who wallow in sin and walk in the broad way that leads to destruction.

(3) They talk the language of praise and thanksgiving. Gratitude is the language of heaven for ever and ever. And we have cause to adopt this language upon earth. Well may we adopt the same language of the Psalmist—"What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" Great are our obligations to God. Mankind have fallen into a state of sin, and He has sent His only Son to redeem them, and sends His Gospel to call us to the hope of glory.

This precious news is overlooked by most, despised by some, and ridiculed by others. If we look to the conversation and conduct, not only of the world in general but likewise of

those who can have access to their Bibles, we have every cause to bless God that we do not run to the same excess of riot that they do, nor make our belly our God and the world our portion. If we got a view of sin we have cause to bless God that He opens up to us a door of hope in the Gospel of His Son, and it is also cause of thankfulness that, whereas others gratify their sinful passions, we make it our business, by the assistance of grace, to subdue our sins and prepare ourselves for the Kingdom of God. It habitually prepares them for relishing the sure and rational enjoyment of the Kingdom of God. Regeneration gives a new turn and change to the heart, thoughts and affections.

The thoughts are naturally low and base, and the affections are carnal. The enjoyments of heaven are pure and spiritual, rational and sublime. The spirit of religion enables us to deny ourselves to those pleasures which debase the mind and hinder the thoughts from ascending to great objects. The grace of God is the education that prepares us for heaven. The sons of great men are entitled by their birth to rank and princely fortunes to support that rank. But their education is what qualifies them for supporting their rank with dignity and honour. In like manner, the grace of God qualifies His people for the high rank to which He calls them. They are to be companions of the princes of heaven, and share the honours of cherubims and seraphims of glory. To prepare them for this honour they must gradually conquer their corruptions, and submit during their minority to the whole will of God.

(3) The next thing proposed was the impossibility of a sinner being admitted in his sins to the Kingdom of God. This doctrine can be proved clearly when we take a view of the Word of God, His attributes, and the state of the sinner himself. The Word is clear, express and peremptory. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Except ye repent ye shall perish. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. They that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. They that continue in unbelief shall be condemned.

From the general tenor of the whole Word of God we find that a change of heart and life is indispensibly necessary for every sinner. Scripture clearly informs us that we are sinners by nature and practice; that sin has made us obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God; that we must be washed in the blood and interested in the merits and partakers of the grace of a Saviour before we can enter into the Kingdom of God. The Gospel says, "Believe and thou shalt be saved," and as Scripture is clear and expressive, reason may assure us that God Almighty is a being of infinite purity and holiness. Now, a

holy being cannot take delight in sin or have pleasure in the works of iniquity. And as His holiness and purity will necessarily hate them, His justice will as necessarily punish. Sinners will not always be led to think that God is such an one as themselves. He will reprove them and set their iniquity before their face.

Human legislators procure respect for their laws by necessary acts of severity and justice. And all laws, humane and Divine, would be trampled upon by the wicked if they were not sanctioned by punishments. Guilty sinners, therefore, going on in sin and dying without repentance must fall into the hands of the living God.

His truth is likewise engaged to punish sin. He has said it, and He will surely do it. To say that God will not punish sin is to contradict, not only the Word of God, but likewise all the ideas we have of Him as a perfect Being. The very heathen, by the dim light of nature, discovered and believed this truth. And we may prove this from the state of the sinner himself. A future state is the general belief of mankind. The opinion must be true, for it is impossible that the goodness of God would suffer all mankind to be in error. Reason and common sense will say that mankind were created for some higher enjoyments than the brute creation. A future state is the only thing that can explain and throw light upon all the dark dispensations of Providence in this lower world. The doctrine is clear, for notwithstanding all the efforts of infidelity, all the lethargy of sin, all the sleep of conscience, sinners are uneasy when they come to die. How shall we account for all the terrors, and anguish, and agony which several great offenders have felt at death, but by a hereafter? Why are the generality of mankind afraid of death, not even excepting philosophers and great scholars? Why are good men afraid of death till they conquer this fear by faith in a Saviour? Guilt on the conscience is surely the cause; and it may occasionally give concern to good men till the blood of sprinkling calms their fears. But to return to the sinner. He must come at last to the bed of death. He has lived all his days in sin, and will one say now that he is fit for the Kingdom of God? He will not say so himself; let us examine him. He must, he will be naturally afraid, unless a false hope lulls his conscience asleep in the delusion of sin. In this case his condition is doubly awful. But the general condition of mankind at death is very different. Let us draw near. He is a great scholar, an infidel lying in the agonies of death. He ridiculed religion, he laughed at the Gospel and denied a future state. If there be no future state, what ails him? Why is he afraid? Are not these fears the bugbears of a dis-

tempered imagination, the offspring of superstition and folly ? A scholar, a man of learning, should be above those idle fears. If it be said that he is mad, deprived of reason, the answer is very plain. If this is the cause of his madness, it couldn't happen if he did not believe the doctrine. And what made him now believe it ? An awakened conscience, and this without a view of the consolation of the Gospel might naturally affect his reason. Come now to another apartment. This is one of His disciples. A great man, one of the peers of the kingdom. He drank the fatal poison of infidelity, and took his fill of the pleasures of sin and sense. Behold now his ghastly looks, and hear the language of his lips. He curses his own existence, and blasphemes the God that made him. And see now another of his companions in sin that reformed the other year; he is in distress of mind, but does not fall into absolute despair, for a clergyman has read to him some chapter in Isaiah and in the Four Gospels. This supports his drooping spirits. If you go over to that cottage you shall see a poor, labouring man dying in comfort. He led a good life, and dies with that faith he always had for years in his Saviour. How different from the sinner. And is this sinner fit for heaven ? Is a man that has lived in sin now fit to live in heaven ? A fish is as fit to live on dry land. What pleasure can the unclean libertine have in the pure, chaste delights of heaven ? Sinners of every kind are enemies, and can have no relish in the work of the place. Can the man who has been wallowing in the mire of sin relish the company and the employment of angels ? That a man who has been lately in the company of harlots should, without a change of heart, be admitted into the bosom of Abraham is unthinkable even for us. The glutton and drunkard would be out of their element there, for they would not find well-furnished tables and the sparkling glass. Instead of the drunkard's song, he would hear there the loud hallelujah, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. He had no relish for this kind of music upon earth, and the worship is still more spiritual in heaven.

The song is likewise upon a higher key, and what would make it still more disagreeable to him is that it is not likely to end soon. When attending worship upon earth he had one comfort; that it would be soon over. What gave him no pleasure upon earth could give him none in heaven. Change of place does not make a change in the mind, and though a sinner were admitted to company and employments he does not love, he would not be happy among them. The envious man would see such a profusion of happiness with every person that he could meet with nothing that would feed his malignant humour. The proud person would get none

to bow to him or to feed his pride. The poor worldling would hear nothing or see nothing that would attract his attention or gain his love. He would find that gold, his favourite metal, was used only to pave the streets, and if in his usual way his sordid soul would stoop to gather it, he would soon betray his own idolatry and be immediately expelled from the sacred society. In a word, heaven is a place of consummate purity, and the company and enjoyments of that place is so contrary to the sentiments, the views, and the very nature of sinners in general that they must reconcile contraries and blind darkness with light before any person without the grace of God can be admitted to that holy place and delightful society. When sinners examine their own minds but for a short time, conscience shows them two awful impediments to their being admitted. There is guilt of many unpardoned, unrepented sins lying upon their conscience; there is a strong attachment to the objects of sin and sense, and, consequently, are invincibly contrary to the will of God and to the pure and rational enjoyments of heaven.

(4) Give some directions to such of my hearers as wish to experience this saving change upon their own souls.

Scripture is clear that regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God, and this is the concurring language both of the Old and New Testaments. It is likewise equally clear that unbelief is the great sin of all that hear the Gospel. And if this be true, which it certainly is, there is something in our power, else unbelief would not be our sin. Our Lord complains often of the unbelief of the Jews notwithstanding all the miracles He had wrought among them. And one of the Apostles asks, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" So that contempt of the Gospel is a great crime. Now a person could not justly be punished for a thing if he could not really avoid it. Sinners could avoid sin and unbelief, for God is not unjust, and the great Judge of all the earth will surely do right. It is therefore our duty to do what God has put in our power, and when we do so let us put ourselves in His hands, for He is a gracious God and has exalted His mercy above the heavens. We are then, in the first place, to examine ourselves, and for this purpose we should be open to examination, and allow conscience to speak. Conscience, next to God, knows best what we have done amiss. When it examines our past actions by the light of the Word and law, and by the rules of right reason, it has many charges against us. It knows our actions, and it can trace them to the very spring from whence they proceed. The motives that direct us and sway our conduct are not hid from our own minds and thoughts. Mankind may judge favourably of us, and praise

when they should bestow censure. People may get a name for benevolence, for hospitality, for generosity, when the motives that actuate them to perform these things may make them very criminal in the sight of God. If our duties, if our most splendid virtues and performances, pass through the fiery trial of an impartial, enlightened, well-informed conscience they are still of sin, and if they are put in the balance of the sanctuary they will be found wanting. However much we may be blinded by prejudice and self-love, if we have any spark of modesty or candour left within us, we may honestly make the acknowledgment of a prophet and first-rate saint. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. If we acknowledge the truth of Scripture, we must confess that all our actions should be directed by a view to the glory of God and the good of our brethren of mankind. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." This is the sum of the moral law. Let conscience speak—Is this our conduct, is this our character? When we perform actions which ourselves and others are ready to applaud, can we always honestly say that the principle thing we had in view was the glory of God and the good of souls? Have we done these things to please God, or to please ourselves? Conscience gives the verdict. And when it does it will acknowledge the truth of Scripture, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And if this is the truth, how shall we appear to ourselves when we examine our guilty actions? Our custom is, owing to the deceitfulness of our hearts, to examine what good things we can find in our hearts and lives and to extenuate our sins; but if we deal honestly with ourselves and take the law as explained by our Saviour for our rule, we must plead guilty before God. Instead of being justified by our works, our best works will condemn us. Scripture informs us that we must be born again and become new creatures before we can see the Kingdom of God. If this be true, and reason as well as Scripture will inform us that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped with a pure mind, if we have any idea at all of a future state in heaven, we must believe that it is inhabited by beings of an exalted character, and by pure and holy intelligences. Scripture informs us who are the persons fit to be admitted into those bright abodes as nothing that is sinful or unclean can enter, for holiness is the character of the place.

(2) And if we are serious and honest in our self-examination, the result will be our forsaking sin. Although it must be owned that sin cannot be broken in the heart without the grace of God, it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that a man can break off bad habits and reform his outward conduct.

He can give up drunkenness and become sober, give over uncleanness and live regularly. These things in a great measure are in our own power, and we ought to break our chains and spring to liberty. Now, if we do not what is in our own power, is it not meet that we should suffer the just effects of our own misconduct? To forsake sin is a duty, whether we have grace or not—a duty equally incumbent upon sinners and saints. When the men of Nineveh were threatened with the Divine judgments, they took concern and forsook their evil ways. The King recommended it to them to fast and pray and to forsake their sins. He was not acquainted with the doctrine of the Gospel and the impotence of human nature. He enjoined to his people what he believed was in their own power. They did so, and God did the rest, for He accepted their endeavours and spared the city.

(3) We are to go to the Saviour and beg of Him to give us faith and repentance.

Grace is free, and our Saviour is exalted a Prince on the right hand of the Majesty on High to give repentance and bestow His heavenly gift upon the rebellious sons of men. He promises the new heart, and informs us in His Word that He will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Perhaps it may be objected that God is not bound to give grace to our endeavours. He was not bound to show favour to the men of Nineveh. He did it, however. Let us suppose that a rich man had a servant, and that he goes from home for some weeks, and leaves directions with his principal servant about the farm in general. When his master returns, he finds all his commands have been complied with. The servant likewise informs him that there is a certain small field in such a part of the farm which he dug and trenched and manured, and that it wants nothing but seed to sow it, and that it will yield a crop. The man is not bound to give seed, but is it not probable that he will order the field to be sown, and that it will repay him for all the pains bestowed upon it? The rule of our duty is the revealed will of God. Now, it is His will that we abstain from sin and restrain our sinful desires, live soberly and regularly, attend the means of grace, and cry incessantly to heaven for grace in the name of Christ. I will not absolutely say whether or not God is bound to give us grace in this way of duty; but I shall say it is our safest way to try. I shall cite two witnesses, and we shall hear their evidence. I mean the Prophet Isaiah and the Evangelist Matthew. The one says, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." The other says, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." And when we obtain the grace of God we shall then confess, "Not

to our endeavours, but to thy great name be the glory." It shall be found that we are indebted to grace for keeping us in the means, waiting upon Him, and doing our duty, leaving it in His unerring wisdom how and when He shall give us comfort.

(4) We are patiently to wait for an answer. We are not by any means to give up prayer, though we find our hearts hard and destitute of spiritual comfort. We must not give up, though we cannot say in our experience that we have the root of the matter in us. The benefit we ask is worth all our pains; we must not give up, for our all depends upon this. And what though unbelief should tell us that we are not converted and that our prayers are not accepted. If we read the Book of Psalms we find the experiences of the people of God agree with our own. It is our duty to wait and believe that it will be well with us, and that He will break sin in our souls. It is our duty to believe that God will save us, though we find strong corruptions in our souls. For what is faith but believing what we do not see? It is our duty to attempt this faith; to him that believeth all things are possible. When we view our sins they seem to stand as armed legions to preclude our entering the gates of paradise. But our Saviour came to the world and paid a price for us. His Spirit can destroy our sins, and why should we doubt His willingness? What brought Him from heaven? The salvation of sinners, surely, for He came to call them to repentance.

APPLICATION.

First, then, this doctrine speaks comfort to all the people of God who have experienced this saving change upon their own souls. Has he convinced you of sin and filled your souls with the consolation of the Gospel? Have you fled for safety to the true city of refuge? You now believe, and this gives your souls relief. You are now called upon to live up to your glorious privileges. If you are born again you are sons and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. These are great, glorious, and unspeakable benefits. But remember you are to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you to glory and virtue. Grace is like light, and your light is to shine before men that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven. You are not to put your candle under a bushel. Do something for Him who has done a great deal for you. Gratitude calls upon you to glorify Him. He is your best Friend, and you should tell others what He has done for your souls, and gain them to religion by the purity of your sentiments and the integrity of your conduct.

(2) And as this doctrine speaks comfort to the righteous, it speaks terror to the ungodly. With regard to gross, open sinners, reason and revelation, Scripture and the classics, Moses and Plato, show us their doom. And our Lord, in the words of the text, assures us that even a profession of religion, without the grace of God in the soul, is not enough to qualify us for heaven. Nicodemus was a Pharisee of the strictest sect among the Jews, and yet our Lord informs him that regeneration was absolutely necessary for him. Let us not, then, in contradiction to such strong declarations of the Scriptures of truth, amuse and deceive ourselves with a false hope. The Scriptures cannot be broken. This is an awful thought.

Let us, then, lastly, take an advice equally necessary for all men. Let us calmly and impartially examine if the Scripture is the Word of God. If it be, it cannot mislead or deceive us. Scripture carries its own evidence along with it. Fire shows itself by its light and heat. If we are blind to this light, awful is our state (2nd Cor. iv. 3), and reason will concur with the doctrine of the text. As heaven is a place of purity, they must be pure that enter. Let us then set apart some portions of our time to make up our peace with God, and earnestly cry to Him to engrave His holy image upon our souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON PSALM xcvi. 1-2

Ps. xcvi. 1, 2—"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

GOD brings about His counsels by contrary events. The belief of a God is a universal principle. It is coeval with the first dawning of reason. There is something within us that may raise a thought to our Maker. Heathens as well as Christians have acknowledged and adored a Supreme Being, though heathens buried their belief of this truth in unrighteousness. And as reason and Scripture inform us there is a God, they inform us likewise that His kingdom is over all. He ruleth in the armies of heaven, and over the princes and potentates of the earth. He manifesteth His glorious presence in heaven, but He reigneth in all parts of His works. His providence comprehendeth all things from the meanest reptile that crawls upon the ground to the highest angel in glory. I shall, therefore—

- I. In the first place, prove the doctrine,
- II. Answer objections. For though clouds and darkness are about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.
- III. That the reign of grace is the cause of universal joy and gladness.
- IV. Inference.

I. I shall prove that the doctrine that the Lord reigneth is clear from the following arguments:—

(1) He created all things. The universe is a glorious fabric. It is the contrivance of Almighty Power and infinite wisdom. It is a curious and wonderful piece of workmanship. But He that formed that glorious machine can over-rule and manage it for the purposes of His own glory. The art of man has contrived many wonderful works. And it will be acknowledged that the man who has made any curious piece of work, such as a clock or watch, can easily keep it in order when once

set agoing. And it is as easy or easier for God to manage a universe as it is for man to manage a complicated piece of machinery.

(2) Though the universe is a great work and stupendous past comprehension to our understandings, which are but finite, let us consider that He has almighty power joined to infinite goodness, and these under the direction of infinite wisdom. And to talk in the language of men, this qualifies Him to rule the universe. When we survey creation we are swallowed up in astonishment. The extent of it baffles imagination in her most daring flights, and the variety of the different works and the seeming irregularity of the several heavenly bodies strikes us dumb with astonishment. The reports that learned men have brought back almost exceed belief, and must stagger the faith of the illiterate. The excursions of the comets and the distance of the fixed stars give us such a view of the wonders of creating power as must overwhelm our thoughts. But God, by His wisdom, superintends these His works. He knows the number of the stars and calleth them by their names.

(3) He is present everywhere throughout the extent of His works. He is in every part of the universe and beyond the bounds of creation. And as He is present everywhere, He works and rules in every place. He can be no stranger to any part of His works. He knows the bounds, the uses and properties of all His creatures and of every part of His works. He is perfectly and intimately acquainted with everything and with every circumstance that can possibly exist. He knows our thoughts, our designs and our motions much better than we do ourselves, and as He knows them He can rule them. He rules the actions of His friends, and over-rules, in spite of them, the actions of his enemies. He rules in heaven, in hell, and upon earth, and however dark and complicated the actions of His rational creatures may be, He rules them so as to bring glory to Himself, and make everything work for the good of His Church and people.

(4) He cannot withdraw Himself from any of His works. That would be an imperfection in Him. If there was any part of creation where God was not present He could not work or preside. And if wickedness were excusable anywhere it is in that part where God is not present. But such place does not and can not possibly exist. When we speak or think of God we confine Him to heaven alone, as if He were in that glorious place and nowhere else. But the heavens and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Him. He is as essentially present here as He is in heaven. And therefore every place is too sacred to commit sin in. He knows the thoughts,

words and actions of all His creatures, and He will judge them accordingly, for nothing is hid from Him. His enemies cannot fly from Him or escape His justice, and wherever His people are He can meet them and give them comfort. He was present with Jonah in the whale's belly, and with Daniel in the lions' den, and however mean and private the habitation of His people may be He is with them in all their distresses.

(5) The several remarkable interpositions of Divine providence demonstrate this truth. It is a truth that God hath appointed a day wherein to judge the world in righteousness. Scripture likewise informs us that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. But to show men that He will surely judge them hereafter, He sometimes even in this same world brings their wickedness to light and punishes them. And this shows that the heavens rule. The crimes of murder, theft and adultery have often been discovered in a wonderful manner, and by what men would call trivial circumstances. The theft of Achan and the plot of Haman are brought to light, and this was calculated to show that as God is now the Witness of wicked actions, He will hereafter be the righteous Judge. And though the thief and adulterer should escape in this world by a false oath or some other means, this will more highly aggravate their sin and their punishment.

(6) The doctrine is clear when we consider the wonderful manner in which God has supported and defended His Church in every age of the world. Though God reigneth everywhere, even among the heathen and among the wicked, yet He reigneth particularly in His Church by His Word and Spirit. His common providence over-ruleth the actions of bad men; but His Holy Spirit rules in the Church. He had a Church from the beginning of the world. The reign of grace began early, but the Church was confined to one family and to one spot of the earth for several ages. But the Church became conspicuous from the commencement of Christianity and the reign of grace began eminently with the preaching of the Gospel. And wherever there was a Church, whether privately or publicly, the power of darkness and the potentates of the earth were combined against her. But God proved to be her help, and that right early. He defeated her enemies and defended His people. God ruleth among wicked nations, whether they will or not. He sets bounds to their wickedness and gets glory to His justice and truth by the most atrocious actions of men. But He reigneth in the Church in the manner in which He would wish to rule. He is King over a free and a willing people, made so in a day of His power.

The reign of grace has commenced already, and it will proceed gradually until the earth at last shall be full of His glory as the waters cover the sea. Its subjects shall be as numerous as the dew-drops on a pleasant summer morning. And in the latter days, when Christ's numerous converts shall appear in all the beauties of holiness, and the reign of grace shall have become absolute and universal, then shall the words of the text be fulfilled in its utmost latitude. The incarnate God shall reign from the rising to the setting sun. There shall be a universal jubilee, and the Gospel trumpet shall pronounce the joyful sound from pole to pole.

II. Answer objections.—For though clouds and darkness are about Him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. It will be freely acknowledged by all the friends of revelation that providence is a great mystery and the judgment of God a great depth, but though darkness attends His administration, it is a truth that He reigneth and that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. I shall endeavour to answer the objections that might arise in the hearts of friends or enemies to this delightful truth that the *Lord reigneth*. The objections that arise are the following :—

- (1) That God permits and does not punish gross actions.
- (2) That friends are treated like enemies and enemies like friends.
- (3) That God suffers error, delusion and vice to prevail, and does not send the light of the Gospel to all nations.
- (4) That the Gospel itself has little or no effect upon the generality of those who hear it. And as these are truths that cannot be controverted, how can it be said that God reigneth in righteousness ?

To these things we answer that some appearances in providence staggered the faith of the Psalmist himself, but he got satisfaction when he went into the sanctuary. We shall, therefore, answer these objections from Scripture.

(1) The first objection is that God permits and does not punish gross actions. Instead of punishing the murder, bloodshed, and usurpation of Senacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, and Caesar, He not only permitted them, but He seemed by the success He gave them to countenance and approve them. This was far, however, from being the case (Isaiah x.). He was far from approving of such gross breaches of the law of nature, which is the moral law as delivered to Jews and Christians. But for wise and holy ends he permitted the lust of ambition and love of power to rage in the breasts

of these unprincipled tyrants, and by the murder and carnage of which they were guilty, He punished the manifold crying sins of guilty nations, whose crimes were a disgrace to humanity. His infinite wisdom made use of these monsters to scourge the human race for their crimes. And in fact this very fact is an argument that God Almighty does rule upon earth. He punishes the sins of many by the sins of one man, and when he finishes his guilty career he is punished in turn. And the page of history informs us that this has been often the fate of tyrants. God is holy and just in suffering this to be the case, and His goodness and wisdom are clear in thus punishing the sins of guilty nations. These awful dispensations prevent a great deal of wickedness, and hinder the wicked from making this world an epitome of hell. And though they do not effect a radical cure, they show us what awaits sinners in another world when the effects of sin are so awful in this. Such punishments produce a temporary reformation, and they are renewed occasionally else mankind would entirely putrify and lay Divine justice under the necessity of destroying sinners by a universal punishment from the face of the earth. This happened to the old world, and to Sodom and its neighbouring cities. Though God is long suffering, He even punishes in this same life. It sometimes happens that great criminals may partially reform or perhaps may become true penitents. In such cases they may be spared and their tranquility may be lengthened for some time, so that God has wise ends in permitting and not punishing sin for a time.

(2) That friends are treated like enemies and enemies like friends. This objection is likewise an argument for Divine government. God is infinitely wise, and He knows what is best for His creatures in general. Some good men have strong and inveterate corruptions, and the darling sin has taken such a hold of them that if they were not kept down by some afflictive dispensation they would be in danger of being lost. If they had health and riches they would gratify their passions. We have sad instances of this in David and Solomon. And there are many good men in the world at this day that require such discipline, and if they did not get it there would be necessity for daily miracles. And even granting that they are thus dealt with in sovereignty, as Job was, the trial of their faith and patience will be amply rewarded hereafter. The selection of such suffering heroes in the spiritual world is of great and unspeakable service to spectators, and a means of bringing them home to God. Besides, poverty and affliction, less or more, is often the lot of humanity. All suffer affliction, and good men are not exempted from a means eminently calculated to wean them from the world and bring

them to the foot of the cross. And there is no injury done to them, for this is not their rest, nor is the world their portion. God likewise permits wicked people to rise in the world, to amass riches and to acquire power. This, however, is no proof of His regard for them, but the reverse. Ill-gotten riches are no proof of Divine love. They are given as tokens of wrath, as the flesh to the Israelites. And it may be asked of the Christian, "Would he take riches at the expense of conscience and the ruin of poor families?" He would not. And though a wicked man is not hindered by any miracle or Divine interposition from bringing any iniquitous schemes to perfection, there is a Power above that sees him and will punish him. He may flourish for a moment like the mushroom, but he will fall headlong at last. We are sure that God has wise and holy ends in what he permits, and though we cannot account for what He does, he Himself will explain the riddle before men and angels at last.

(3) That God suffers error, delusion and vice to prevail in the world, and does not send His Gospel to all nations. No doubt this is a dark dispensation, and though we cannot fully explain it, we can say something to justify the Divine government. A great part of the world is overspread with Mohammetan and Popish delusions and the gross vices that are their natural consequences, but when we consider the causes we need not be surprised at the effects. The Christian world made a bad use of the Gospel. Instead of receiving the truth in the love of it, they preferred delusion and heresy to the Gospel of salvation. The divisions and heresies among professing Christians encouraged a vile imposter to set up a false religion, and to poison millions of the human race by his false and poisonous doctrines. Another great part of the globe introduced idolatry, and corrupted the pure doctrines of the Gospel by several false mixtures that poisoned innumerable souls. And what is still more awful, they punished with death any that attempted to preach or spread genuine Christianity. And this is a true account of Popery and Mohammetanism. Christianity was established by miracles at its commencement. Shall we then blame the righteous Governor of the universe though He did not throw away miracles upon a set of wretches who deluded mankind with false ideas, and were ready to destroy with fire and sword any that would attempt to preach Christ alone and expose the folly of worshipping and trusting saints and angels. God is infinitely holy, just and true in withholding from idolatrous and deluded nations precious truths which he well knew they would not welcome or embrace. And He sees likewise that it would be the same with other pagan nations were the

Gospel offered to them. The Judge of all the earth will surely do right. We might as well blame our Maker for not making offers of grace and working miracles in order to convert fallen angels as to send missionaries to Popish, Pagan and Mohammedan countries. They would be murdered and abused, and the delusions that deceive the poor people would be more rivetted than ever among them. But the day is coming when the Gospel will pass in triumph through these countries and bring many souls to Christ.

(4) That the Gospel itself has little or no effect upon the generality of those who hear it. We must acknowledge it is a melancholy truth that many who live in a Christian country lead worse than a pagan life. A stranger would not know by them that ever they heard the truth. They are distinguished by nothing but their covetousness or their wickedness. They have nothing Christian about them. If God is the Author of the Gospel, and if it is the power of God to salvation, how does this happen? Why are so few sanctified and saved by it? The cause is obvious. They hate it with a perfect hatred, and do not believe the truth. There are many professors, but they do not embrace the Gospel, but something else in its place. Not only the bulk of the hearers, but the great majority of professors are strangers to the genius and spirit of the Gospel. This being the case, shall we say, then, that God is indifferent to the success of it, and that He does not rule within the Church? We will not, for He truly reigns among His people, and He has a people where the Gospel is preached. It would be bold and impudent in any man to say that God Almighty could not convert the devil himself. But though Divine power is infinite, yet we have no cause to look for such an event. And it seems to be almost equally unlikely that God will exert His power to convert a worldling whose affections, like the mole, are constantly burrowing in the earth, and who prefers his sordid pelf to the God that made him. He is willing to forego many days and many advantages and opportunities for the good of his soul, but will not lose one opportunity that will bring a penny to his pocket. What ground have we to expect that God will convert a Sabbath-breaker, whose constant business it is to shut his eyes upon the light and to sear his conscience as with a hot iron? Such instances of grace may happen, but who can promise them? God ruleth in the Church by His GRACE in sanctifying his willing people and by His justice in hardening the reprobates who turn a deaf ear to His Word and Spirit. To show the power and grace of God, He often calls the greatest of sinners to show that none is excluded, if He comes even at the eleventh hour. God reigneth, and these are some of the

tremendous acts of His government. But as to those who obey, He fills their souls with His grace and with the consolation of His Spirit.

III. That the reign of grace is cause of universal joy and gladness. When the Gospel was made known to the shepherds, the angels ushered in the joyful news by songs of thanksgiving. The Gospel is the reign of grace, and it is called the Kingdom of God, and it is the cause of universal joy for the following reasons :—

- (1) It emancipates millions of slaves from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and restores them to true freedom.
- (2) It is the dawn or morning star of everlasting joy and uninterrupted happiness in the paradise of God.
- (3) It secures to the people of God a kingdom which can never be moved.

(1) It emancipates millions of slaves from the tyranny of sin and Satan and restores them to true freedom. It has been a constant practice among the enemies of our holy religion that if they took any of our ships, that they made slaves of their prisoners and kept them in disagreeable captivity. They would not release them unless a great sum was paid for their ransom. But the slavery of sin is much more awful; the chains are forged for the soul itself, and what makes it more dangerous is that the sinner does not feel his own slavery. He rejoices in his slavery, and laughs at those who pity him and would cheerfully set him at liberty. We have heard of men in liquor who thought themselves sober, and accused the sober person that spoke to them of drunkenness. The madman does the same. Now, Scripture calls the sinner the fool and the madman. And in a spiritual view they are so, and always acknowledge it when God opens their eyes. Our Lord calls the worldly-wise man a fool the night of his death. And he was a great fool, notwithstanding the largeness of his barns and the great price he might have got for his corn. Now, what makes the disease of sin the more dangerous is that he will not be made free. He chooses to continue in sin. Instead of seeing himself an object, he either pities or is angry at those who would give him an advice. The savage in America thinks himself a free man, and, like the Hottentot in Africa, thinks the shocking life he leads preferable to the elegant life of a European. The child, though up to the knees in mud and his clothes bespattered with filth, thinks himself happier at his play than in the confinement of a school. His father thinks otherwise. The sensualist in the mire of his lusts, and the worldling in the hurry of his business, think themselves the gallant spirits of the age and the wise men of the

world. They would not exchange condition with the child of grace, who already anticipates the joys of heaven and feeds upon angels' food. But though the devil has blinded their eyes that they are his willing captives, what are they but slaves at best? And the wages he gives his slaves is the whip. Even in this same life the votaries of pleasure and the worshippers of Mammon have many a bitter pang. They never dare to examine their Bibles or their consciences, and if they should happen to bring either to the house of God they are afraid to look them in the face. They think the Bible a burden in their pockets. Why? Because it is a still greater burden to their conscience. How great, then, is the misery of the sinner; how galling this yoke of sin! What joyful news is the Gospel that proclaims freedom to such a wretch. The folly of the Hottentot, of the savage, and of the child are innocent in comparison; but the folly and madness of the sinner are inexcusable. He is a slave and is resolved to continue so. If he submitted to the reign of grace his chains would be knocked off, and he would taste of pleasures to which he has been a stranger all the days of his life.

(2) It is the dawn or morning star of everlasting joy and uninterrupted happenings in the paradise of God. Grace is the earnest of glory. When we see the morning star we know the day is drawing very near. And when a man gets the grace of God, salvation comes to his house as it did to the house and soul of Zacchues, and it has the same happy effect. Zacchues restored the sinful penny, and so will the sinner when grace touches the soul. Grace makes the sinner part with all his sins. And by doing so he is gradually prepared for the joys of immortality. As he begins to relish the pleasures of religion he forgets and even despises his former pleasures in sin. As a child, when he becomes a philosopher, looks down upon his former sports and play, the Christian only relishes now the pleasures that will last for ever. The very thought of them makes him happy and brightens his prospects with cheerful hope; and his hope is not founded in uncertainty. It is as sure as the Word of God, not like the hope of the worldly man, which is subject to many casualties. The Christian's hope is founded upon a rock, and as sure as Jesus Christ is in paradise, his followers will be there also. Not like the most exquisite pleasures in this world, which soon end, or we soon tire of them; the pleasures of Paradise are ever new, and they are of such a nature that we can never cloy of them. They are large as our wishes, immortal as our souls.

(3) It secures to the people of God a kingdom which can never be moved. This is what makes heaven a heaven indeed.

Angels fell, and so did Adam from his original rectitude. But whoever enters the gates of Paradise shall never more be put out. The happiness of a great part of mankind depends upon the will and caprice of others. It embitters the pleasures of a poor man that his landlord can remove him in a short time and perhaps turn him upon the wide world. And should he have a long lease, death will soon terminate his prospects. But the lease of the Christian in Paradise is coeval with the days of eternity, for it is a kingdom that cannot be moved. The kingdoms of this world are liable to change. Where are Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman Empires? They are gone like the baseless fabric of a vision. But the Kingdom of God will have no end, and the subjects of it will be happy for ever and ever.

INFERENCE.

(1) From the doctrine we heard we may gather that He brings about His counsels by contrary events. It was promised Joseph by Divine dreams that he would be a great man, and it was promised David that he would be a King. The contrary events that happened paved the way for their future greatness. The sufferings of Joseph prepared him for the second honour in Egypt, and the afflictions of David made him conspicuous in the land, and prepared the minds of the Israelites to receive him as their King. And our Lord, of whom both were types, came to His kingdom through suffering and death.

(2) Lastly—We may infer from the doctrine that every man must be a subject of the Kingdom of Grace who expects to enter into the Kingdom of Glory. In fact, they are but one kingdom, and the one is a part of the other, or rather they are but two parts of the same kingdom. And from the glory of the righteous we may infer the misery of the wicked. The doctrine may show us that we have something to do in order to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On II. PETER i. 1-11

THE spirit and doctrine of this Epistle is so very like the first that it is very surprising how some learned men could pretend they discovered a different style or spirit in it, or that it was written by any other than the person who calls himself the author of the Epistle. That the same person is the author of both Epistles will be clear to any that peruse and compare them carefully. The great design of all the inspired penmen is to lay the foundation of true doctrine carefully in the first place. And after showing that Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, is the Head Corner Stone of the building, they are to build the doctrine of holiness upon this foundation. And that this is the method of our blessed Apostle we shall soon see.

Verse 1.—“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

He here designs himself not only an Apostle, but also a servant of Jesus Christ. Instead of being ashamed of the service of Jesus Christ he reckons it his highest honour and glory, and, indeed, those who are His servants have no cause to be ashamed of His service. Another of the Apostles tells us he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ as it was the power of God to salvation. Those who are ashamed of Christ and His service give sad proof that they do not belong to Him. He addresses his Epistle to those who had obtained like precious faith with the Apostles. As there are different classes of Gospel professors, there are likewise several kinds of faith; but there is one kind genuine. It is called precious faith and the faith of God's elect. It is wrought by the Spirit of God in the soul, and brings forth good fruits. It is obtained through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. He yielded perfect obedience to the Divine law, and suffered for the sins of His people. And thus He wrought a complete and perfect righteousness, in which His people can stand before God. They believe and embrace this righteousness by faith. This righteousness is of infinite value and dignity, as being the righteousness of God, and

when faith embraces it it then deserves to be called precious faith. And without this faith a true Christian cannot be content or happy, for no other faith can please God or a well-informed conscience. By this faith we are united to God, and derive strength to obey the Divine law. The faith that justifies will naturally sanctify us. It strengthens and qualifies us to perform our duty, and prepares us by holiness for the joys of immortality.

Verse 2.—“Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

The great blessing He wishes them is grace and peace. He prays for the Divine work in their souls, and not only so, but that it may increase and abound, and the more grace will abound the more peace and joy will abound in believing. But the grace and peace is obtained by the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ. And how will people know the power of God through our Lord Jesus Christ? We are told in Ephesians i. 19, 20, that God exerted almighty power when He raised Christ from the dead. And nothing less than this power can raise our souls from sin, and when this power is exerted it is only through Christ. It was His merit and sacrifice that procured the Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickens, and when we experience His quickening influence it is then we know God and Jesus our Lord. And this knowledge and wisdom we ought to ask of God.

Verse 3.—“According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness through the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue.”

It is the Divine power that bestows upon us all the things that belong to the spiritual and temporal life, as well as happiness hereafter. And this is owing to the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue. By the Gospel we are called upon to contemplate the Divine glory and power. The presence of God was formerly in the sanctuary. The shechinah was between the cherubims of glory. In the Gospel the presence of God was in the Person of Jesus Christ. What proof would satisfy us as to the presence of God in any place or in any person? Such proof we have in the Gospel. Let us believe the Gospel and we shall see the proof. What would God do if we found Him in any place? He would work some wonder. He did so always in Christ. How do we know that Christ was God? By the works He wrought. Do we wish to get further proof of His Divinity? Let us trust in Him and He will break the power of sin in our souls. He often asked faith from those He meant to heal. Are we destitute of faith and love to Him?

Let us come to Himself for both. Let us, with the blind man, beg of Him that He would open our eyes. And when He desires us to stretch forth the withered arm, let us obey His Divine call. It is true God is Almighty and His grace is invincible. It is equally true that such as are not effectually called will have themselves to blame.

Verse 4.—“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises : that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

By the glorious power or virtue that is exhibited in the Gospel we obtain great and precious promises. The Gospel is full of promises. And what is the substance of all the promises ? Christ. He is the great blessing promised in the Old Testament, and the great blessing He promises in the New Testament is the Spirit. By believing in Christ we obtain the Spirit, and thus become partakers of the Divine nature. The Spirit makes us like God, for God is holy, and His people are holy also. And the great proof of our having the Spirit is that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Whatever corruption or sins we indulged in formerly we now make it our business to escape them; and not only to escape them but to make war against them. The Gospel holds forth to our view the accomplishment of the great promise that the Son of God is come and that life is in Him ; that He has prepared a glorious Kingdom for His followers, and that Himself is the great Captain who leads His people to that blessed place. And from this leading truth proceed all the great promises of the Gospel. When we believe them they purify us, for the precious doctrine is compared to a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This living water puts life in the soul that was dead in sin, and cleanses away all the corruptions of the heart.

What hinders persons from gratifying passions and living as they did formerly ? The great and glorious promises of the Gospel. They believe there is a heavenly Canaan, and this makes them indifferent to the fleshpots of Egypt, and wait with patience in the wilderness. Want of faith destroyed the Israelites; but faith brought Caleb and Joshua to the earthly Canaan.

Verses 5, 6, 7, 8.—“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you,

and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Faith, or a belief of the Divine truths of Scripture, and more especially of what relates to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the fruitful source of holiness and good works. It is the fountain or the mother grace of all the Christian virtues and graces. The Apostle, therefore, here seems anxious that Christians should give proof of their faith. Now, true faith is never empty or idle. And as faith strengthens morality and good works, so the exercise of the Christian virtues will strengthen faith. The more we abound in holiness the more root will faith take in our souls. Sin is the cause of unbelief in the wicked, and unfruitfulness in good works is the cause of that deadness and want of feeling which we may observe even in good men. The Apostle, therefore, encourages us to the practice of the Christian graces. And, besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue. The wise man says that the hand of the diligent maketh rich. The improvement of what we have is the sure way to increase our stock. Industry and diligence make people thrive in this world, and makes them rich in faith and good works for the world to come. We are to add to our faith virtue. By virtue some people understand the active exercise and practice of all moral duties; that faith may not be idle, but put forth itself in work. Though this may be meant, the Apostle here seems to have in view a particular virtue or grace, and that is fortitude or courage. This is a quality necessary for every soldier, and therefore the Apostle Paul addresses Timothy. 2nd Tim. ii. 3, says:—"Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The different duties to which we may be called as Christians require some degree of fortitude or courage. The practice of some duties may procure some degree of respect to Christians, but they may be called to practice duties that will procure for them persecution. Accordingly, we are informed that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. If people oppose sin in themselves and others they may expect opposition from the wicked. They cannot avoid hard names, and it may stand in the way of their preferment. They may be sometimes in danger of being carried down by the stream of wickedness and evil example, or to stand nobly alone in the cause of virtue and religion. And it requires great spiritual bravery to appear singular in the cause of God and religion. Noah, Lot, Daniel, and Obadiah are glorious instances of this virtue. If we appear for Christ he will appear for us; but if we be ashamed of His cause, He will be ashamed of us another day, and there is no Christian but must

have occasion, less or more, for the practice of this virtue. And to virtue knowledge. Knowledge is very necessary for the Christian. It shows him the truth he ought to believe, and the duties he ought to practice. Without this knowledge should a man stumble upon his duty it is but a hit in the dark, for he is not at that time directed by a proper principle. Knowledge is useful, for it is agreeable to our measure of knowledge that we believe and practice. There are duties to which an ignorant Christian must be a stranger, as he does not know and therefore cannot practice them. And to knowledge temperance. This virtue is very necessary for a Christian, as it moderates his affections for lawful and pleasant things. Lawful things, when loved too much, may hurt the soul as well as unlawful things. Accordingly, our Lord mentions wife, children, farms, cattle, merchandise, or things that hinder our faith in Christ and embracing the Gospel. Meat and drink are the support of our life, and nothing can be more lawful than this. And yet our Lord cautions His Apostles against gluttony, drunkenness, and undue care for the things of this life, because they unfit the soul for spiritual concerns. Meat and drink will lag the soul and unfit it for the duties of religion. And it is certain to a demonstration that the cares of this life hinder all ranks from attending to the one thing needful. And to temperance patience. This virtue moderates our affections when we meet with unpleasant things. We are sinners, and we may lay our account with several things in the cause of Divine providence that at first will not please us. God knows the perverse turn of our hearts, our darling sin, and the strength of our pride. He knows the general disorder of our nature, and He knows in particular the corruptions that are most predominant in our frame. And it would be a miracle indeed if all these could be cured without crossing our will and thwarting our inclinations. And when this happens, do we not then greatly stand in need of patience, resignation, and humility? Upon such occasions we are ready to faint and to fret. We know the language of corruption and unbelief, and the workings of tumultuous passions. The language of Scripture is, "Possess your souls in patience. Be still and know that I am God. What I do ye know not, but ye shall know afterwards." David, though a King, was obliged to hear the unfitting language of Shimei, and we must hear the coarse, unbridled language of the wicked. The cure is unpleasant, but it is calculated to humble our pride and bring down our corruption. Providence is in the hand of God, and therefore a dog will not be permitted to bark or a serpent to hiss but for the good of His people. Though venom and corruption are natural to the wicked, they are never permitted

to show this but for our spiritual good. Contrary providences and poisonous expressions meet our corruptions and expel our spiritual plagues. And to patience godliness. And this will keep up the Christian in all the duties of religion, inward and outward, and will furnish and qualify him for all the other duties he may have to perform. A Christian occasionally may get a double share of spiritual comfort. And this is often meant to strengthen him against some particular conflict. Elijah is made to take food twice after other in a short time, but then he had a long journey to perform, and to fast forty days in the strength of that food. In like manner the duties of religion fortify our minds for every other duty to which we may be called. Christians are compared to horses in Pharoah's chariot. They are like oxen in the yoke of Christ. Sometimes they have heavy work, but then they are well fed, and if we feed upon the marrow and fat of the Gospel we shall be strong to perform the duties of the law. If we drink of the fountain of life we shall be enabled to proceed on our course. We are to take food to strengthen us to fight our spiritual battles, and then go forth against all our spiritual enemies. And to godliness brotherly kindness. As a token of our godliness we are to have brotherly kindness. Another Apostle observes that by this we may know if we have passed from death to life if we love the brethren, and when we love them as such it is a mark of the love of God. There are some of them in pitiable circumstances and in great bodily trouble. The sight of them will make the carnal eye to look and abhor them, and there are others of them whose natural tempers are so distant and forbidding that they are so far from drawing love that in many they create disgust. Notwithstanding these disagreeable appendages, they may be the children of God. And if He can love them as such, notwithstanding their disagreeable tempers and their failings, it is a hopeful sign. In fact, we may have things about us that are disagreeable to others, and yet we wish them to love us and to think well of us. God loved Lazarus notwithstanding his sores. He also loved pettish, peevish Jonah, notwithstanding his unreasonable anger and complaints. Let us imitate Him in this. And to brotherly kindness charity. And to complete the choir of Christian graces, the believer is to have charity or universal love to mankind. Our love in this respect must be like the love of God. He not only loves the good and the worthy, but He also loves sinners and unworthy objects. It was for these that our Saviour died. And if this had not been the case what would have become of us all? We are therefore to love sinners, and extend our good-will to all men, according to our power. In the great crowds of sinners around us we cannot tell

who will be converted. We are therefore to wish well to them all, and patiently wait God's day of power. We know that the converts, under the reign of Messiah, will be numerous as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning. With this animating, refreshing prospect before us we may form large views of the kingdom of grace, and if there are large crowds to come in may we not lawfully hope that many of our friends and acquaintances shall be among the number? Let our prayers be large, therefore, as our wishes, and let us contribute by all the means in our power towards forwarding the Kingdom of Christ. Providence has put it in the power of all, less or more, to forward the cause of God. The Apostle here assures us that if we abound in these graces and virtues we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The design of knowledge is practice, and the design of trees is beauty, usefulness, and fruitfulness. And this is the great design of the Gospel. Notwithstanding the corruption of human nature and our own share of that universal malady, yet if we diligently endeavour to grow in the graces of the Christian life, in the duties of moral goodness, we shall certainly succeed. By doing so we shall prove the soundness of our faith. On the contrary, we are informed in the next verse that if we fail in these graces we may be in danger of being found blind deceivers of ourselves.

Verse 9.—“But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.”

In these words we see the danger of being destitute of these virtues and graces, and having an empty, dry faith without works. Such characters are blind and cannot see afar off. Such a man is blind; he cannot see but what is very near him. And is not this an exact picture of the men of the world? They do not see afar off. They do not give themselves time to think of the great eternity, of the miserable realities of another world. They only see what is near them, the profits and pleasures of this life; and they bring this blindness upon themselves by the just judgment of God. They refuse to open their eyes; they look to the things of this world. They love darkness better than light, because their deeds are evil. They have another awful symptom about them. They forget that they were purged from their old sins. By baptism we engage ourselves to make war against the world, the flesh and the devil. We speak here of those baptised when men. By involving ourselves in the cares, the lusts, and the pleasures of this world we fall into the snares of the devil. And the last state of such persons is worse than the first, by which means they render their baptisms of no effect to themselves.

For when they break the covenant they forfeit the blessings, and while they are destitute of the graces of the Christian life, they only mock God by continuing to make a profession of that religion whose duties they do not perform. And though they may use the language of false professors—"Lord, Lord, we have ate and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets," the answer to them will be, unless they repent—"Depart from me, I know you not, ye workers of iniquity." As we would therefore avoid such a doom, let us add the virtues of a Christian life to the faith we profess in the Gospel. Let us beg of God to reveal His Christ to us that we may follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes.

Verses 10, 11.—"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The blessed Apostle had been recommending strongly the duties of Christianity, and now presses upon them to make their calling and election sure. This, it may be said, is giving the same doctrine in other expressions. And it is necessary to put the same truths in a variety of lights to the people. Such is the carelessness and indifference of people that they let the Word pass through their ears without being affected. The same truths are to be given in various forms. What they are indifferent about in one form may affect them very much in another. In the former part of the chapter he urges to diligence in cultivating the Christian graces and performing the Christian duties. And here he urges to diligence in securing our call and election. Secret things belong to God, and we ought not to trouble ourselves with what He has done from all eternity. That we do not know. But we do know what He has commanded us in the Gospel. His command in the Gospel is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this our duty is clear. God commands us to believe this, the Gospel call, and it is directed to us. And we are here commanded to obey and secure the call. By doing so we secure our election. Effectual calling is the fruit of election. This, then, is our great duty, and it requires diligence. The call is to believe and embrace Christ as He is offered freely in the Gospel. Many are enabled to do so by Almighty Grace. And if that Almighty Grace is not vouchsafed to others, where is the fault? In the obstinacy of sinners without doubt. Scripture assures us that Christ is God. He could therefore work miracles. And yet we are told that He could not work mighty works among some because of their unbelief. These are alarming thoughts, and should excite our diligence and prayers.

Against this Christian diligence the enemy lays two stumbling blocks in our way—

- (1) That we are not elected.
- (2) That we are not sure whether we are in a state of grace, and then what will our poor duties and endeavours avail?

First, as to the doctrine of election. We need not be afraid of it if we do our duty. Now, the great duty of the hearers of the Gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a holy life. And it is by doing what God requires of us that we can get any comfort from this doctrine. If people take any comfort from it to live in sin they are under an awful delusion. And if any are kept from their duty by taking gloomy views of it, this is evidently a temptation of Satan's, and people ought to expel it from their minds. By believing we establish our election. If we believe in Christ, the doctrine is friendly to us, and if we do not, no doctrine can give us solid comfort.

Second, as to the other objection, that we are not sure whether we are in a state of grace, and then what will our poor duties and endeavours avail?

To this I answer that it is God alone who knows who has grace, and all His people are not sure at all times whether they have this Divine principle or not, yet they use their endeavours and leave the event to God. If we preached endeavours as a covenant of works we do injury to men's souls. But when we tell them to do their utmost to believe in Christ and to forsake sin, and after doing so to deny themselves and their duties as their means of acceptance, and to trust entirely in Christ, we are their friends. In fact, the Apostle advised all to believe in Christ and to forsake sin. And can sinners absolutely say that they cannot comply with this advice? If a thief or a robber, when tried for his life, would tell his judge that he could not forsake sin, will his apology be sustained? I think not. And will the Judge of all the earth sustain a similar apology from sinners? Let conscience and Scripture answer the question. We know that the indulgence of sin is the cause of unbelief. Unbelief is the great condemnation, and can the sinner do just nothing at all to forsake the sin that feeds his unbelief and makes him continue in his rebellion? He knows the contrary. We are commanded to come to Christ, and if we make our call and election sure we have here two promises to encourage us.

(1) Those who make their call and election sure shall never fall. Observe the difference between those who are true to God and their religion and those who are not. The one

are kept by Him unblameable in their walk and in the plain path of duty. The others are suffered to fall into great sins that disgrace their profession. They turn cold in their religion, and their predominant lusts and sins cloak the good seed and prevent it from growing in their hearts.

(2) An abundant entrance shall be administered to them to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ordinary Christians will be scarcely saved as if by fire, and luke-warm, rotten professors shall be excluded; but those who improve their talents, attend conscientiously the stated means of grace in their power, and adorn the Gospel by a holy life will have a large share of the joys of Heaven. In proportion as people enter into the spirit of true religion, imbibe its sentiments, and practice its duties, they shall obtain its reward. An abundant entrance is waiting them, and the more ridicule they suffer for Christ the more publicly shall they be rewarded before men and angels. Christ despised the shame; the more we do so the more like we are to him, and the more like to Him the more happy we shall be.

INFERENCES.

(1) If we believe the Divine promises of the Gospel they have their proper effect upon us. Faith of any kind will have some effect or other upon the opinions and conduct of the multitude. Whatever they believe they generally follow, and shall not the faith of unseen delights make us to purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit if we hope and wish to partake of them. What peopled the great Continent of America? It was the faith the people of Europe had in the reports they heard of that country. Moses told the Israelites that Palestine flowed with milk and honey. This made them to leave Egypt and follow Him up to the wilderness. A greater than Moses informs us of the heavenly happiness, and if we give credit to His report, we shall follow Him there. Every new act of faith and meditation, every new Christian virtue and grace we exercise, brings us nearer to the heavenly Kingdom, and the joys of religion, like the grapes of Eshcol, give us a foretaste of the unspeakable, pure pleasures of Paradise. Ascend Pisgah and see.

(2) Lastly, to conclude. The practice of the Christian graces and virtues is the perfection of our nature. The recovery of the Divine image is the great end of religion. And the design of faith is practice. The two great principles of Christianity are faith and love. By cultivating the one we promote the other. Faith is an active principle, and love is a delightful principle. Jacob kept sheep for the love he had

to Rachel, and love made him think the time short. The hope of enjoying the love of God for ever will make the Christian perform the different duties to which he is called with alacrity. Means and ordinances, faith and practice, duty and privileges, go hand in hand and qualify us gradually for those unspeakable delights. To do good is the character of God Himself and of His people. To enjoy Him for ever is their supreme felicity. With Him is the fountain of life, and at His right hand are pleasures for evermore. AMEN.

LECTURE

• ON I. PETER v. 1 to End

AFTER the Apostle had given advice and direction to the different ranks of Christians to whom he wrote, he now addresses himself to the ministers of the Gospel, and points out their duty to them likewise. He encourages them to their duty, and animates their hopes by the great reward that awaits them, and then concludes his epistle to all by several useful directions suitable to their various spiritual exigencies.

Verse 1.—“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”

These are the humble advices of the great Apostle, and they are given in language very different from that of those who called themselves his successors. If he was the vicar of Jesus Christ and the head of the Church, he does not give the most distant hint of such pretensions in any of his writings. He addresses himself to the presbyters of the Church, and calls himself their co-presbyter, and such indeed he proved himself by performing the duties of his office. He daily performed the duties of an ordinary pastor among his flock. But there was one thing in which he exceeded all succeeding pastors—he was witness of the sufferings of Christ, and in this respect he was before them. And as he was a faithful follower and apostle of Christ, he was a partaker of the glory that was to be revealed. He did not think his being an apostle exempted him from the duties he owed to his flock, and he could therefore, with the greatest propriety, recommend their duty to the other presbyters of the Church.

Verse 2.—“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

The duty of the presbyter or minister of the Gospel is to feed the flock of God. A pastor will lead his flock into good and wholesome pastures, feed them beside the still waters, and defend them from every danger from men and wild beasts. The spiritual pastor will lead his flock into green pastures also. He will feed them with the words of everlasting life,

and bring them to the living waters that flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb. He was to preach those doctrines particularly which were more immediately calculated to feed their souls. There are many speculations which may amuse the mind and please the fancy when set off with all the charms of eloquence. This kind of doctrine may please the whole, but there are several souls that feel they stand in need of a physician. To such no doctrine can be pleasant but the doctrine of a crucified Christ and the truths more immediately connected with that main truth of Christianity. This is what will properly feed the soul. If Christ does not run through the doctrine it is like a body without a soul. It may have the appearance of doctrine, but it has no life. And as they were to feed the flock, they were to rule it also. The presbyters here are required to do the duty of bishops, the strongest proof that can be given that they were the same order of men. They were to take the oversight of the flock, for that is the duty of the bishop. There is not a text in all the Scriptures of the New Testament requiring that a man should be a bishop over a number of ministers or presbyters. If there was I would blame the Presbyterians for refusing to submit to their superiors. And they were to take the oversight of the flock not by constraint. Several arguments might urge a man to undertake the duty of a bishop of a Christian flock, but as he has no heart for the work, it is only force work; but the Apostle recommends it to them, to do it willingly and not from a principle of covetousness. They were to love the work if they expected to be useful in it and gain souls to Christ.

Verse 3.—“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”

The humble and spiritual government of the Church of Christ is very different from the governments of the world (Mat. xx. 25, 26), and therefore the Apostle forbids the pastors to lord it over God’s heritage. The Church is the lot or patrimony of God and the purchase of Christ. They are heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven, and during their minority they are put under the spiritual governors of the Church, and these governors should use them tenderly. If a great man should put his child under the tuition of a governor, he would take it amiss to use him with harshness and cruelty. The child is the heir of his fortune, and when he comes to age he may remember and resent the injury. The tutor will therefore use him with all the tenderness imaginable consistently with his duty. In like manner the pastors should rule the Church. They are not to rule the flock with any kind of tyranny. Instead of this they are to go before them

and recommend their doctrine by a holy example, and to animate them in their duty.

Verse 4.—“And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

The highest object of ambition in this life is a crown, and after obtaining it and wading through an ocean of blood to do so, they might well say at last, as a certain tyrant said, “Is this all? Is it for this a man destroyed thousands of the human race and lost his own soul also?” Should a man obtain a crown in a lawful way, alas, it is a short-lived happiness. Not so the crown of the faithful pastors; it fadeth not away. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever. The highest sublunary bliss lasts but a short time, even though it should be complete and without the least alloy of misery. The happiness of the Heavenly Kingdom must be surely very great when it is compared to the most glorious objects we can see in this inferior creation; they may well labour in the ministry who have such a glorious hope before them.

Verse 5.—“Likewise ye younger submit yourselves to the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.”

Having explained the duty of the pastors, he now proceeds to explain the duty of the flock. The word younger implies inferiority, as we find in the words of our Lord (Luke xxii. 26). He recommends it to the younger or deacons to obey the presbyter or bishops, and to the Christian congregations to obey their spiritual guides. Not only so, but they were to submit to one another. In a large congregation some might be rich, others poor. Some might have great intellectual abilities, and others inferior talents. Some might be weak in the faith, and others rich in faith and ripening fast for the heavenly glory. But even the rich, the accomplished, and the strong Christians were not to despise the advice or the reproof of their inferiors. This is the true spirit of the Gospel. It is a spirit of humility. The Psalmist, though a great King, acknowledges that he would suffer the righteous to smite him. And by this resolution he shows not only his piety, but his great good sense. We generally love those best who not only flatter our foibles but our sins. But the Christians who rebuke us are our most steady friends, and people always find it so in the day of their distress. Flatterers are very numerous during the sunshine of prosperity; but they forsake a man upon a reverse of fortune. The Apostle’s advice,

therefore, is founded in the truest reason. We all stand in need of mutual advice and reproof. And as this disposition springs from the amiable virtue of humility, He advises us to be clothed with this heavenly grace. Our temporal happiness in a great measure depends upon it, as we are all liable to so many accidents and disappointments in our passage through this life. And if a man has a proud spirit he incurs guilt and exposes himself to danger. By indulging pride we feed a diabolical vice, and we raise to ourselves an almighty enemy, for God Himself resisteth the proud. He is determined to bring him down and expose him to contempt. This happens in all ages. But He gives grace to the humble, and will exalt him to honour.

But, alas, what are we proud of? Some value themselves upon their fine clothes. But, it may be asked, is it not a shame to be proud for what a sheep wore before us? Others are purse-proud, and value themselves for their riches. But will rich trappings and a fine saddle make the ass as noble an animal as the horse? Nor will riches make an earth-worm equal to a Christian who wants these advantages. As to birth, beauty, and strength, we can scarce call them our own. We enjoy them but for a moment. And from the highest pinnacle of honour a man is often brought down in a moment to dwell in the dust. Even mental qualifications are no cause of pride, for what have we that we have not received? And who made us to differ from others? If a man has spiritual pride he exposes himself to a stroke. In a word, everything that raises the pride of men and makes them think themselves to be something should only excite their humility. Justly, therefore, does the Apostle advise us to be clothed with this beautiful grace. And what will further recommend it is this, that the more grace we have the more humble we are. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in our Lord Jesus Christ bodily, and yet He was the humblest Man that ever stood upon this earth. God Himself, though exalted above the highest heaven, yet humbles Himself to take notice of the meanest of the works of His hand; that God, who receives the worship of the enthroned Seraph, satisfies the wants of the young ravens and young lions that cry unto Him. And if the greatest and most exalted Being is the humblest, should we not imitate Him in this respect? He takes care of the lowest of His works, and shall not we look after the meanest of our own species who in other respects are equal to ourselves? We are therefore to be clothed with humility, and if we wear this garment it shall never wax old; the longer we wear it the more beautiful it will become. It will promote our

happiness here, and will prepare us for a seat at the right hand of God.

Verses 6, 7.—“Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in good time, casting all your cares upon Him, for He careth for you.”

The Apostle in the former chapter had informed them that judgment was to begin at the house of God, and exhorts them here to humble themselves under His mighty hand. Many of them were in trouble whether the fiery trial would overtake them or not. Now, trouble is as natural to man as it is for the sparks to fly up. Our troubles arise from various quarters, and they do not come without cause; they are designed to cure us of some evil propensity or sin to which we are subject, either from our constitution, our companions, or our rank in life. Trouble meets us in an idol and for an idol, and trouble is not the creature of chance: it comes from the hand of a wise and gracious God. The flesh is impatient and frets; it is proud and rebels. But it is our duty to submit. The trouble is intended to humble us and lead us to the foot of the Cross. We do not know how long it may lie upon us; only this we may be sure of, that it will not continue longer than is for the glory of God and our good. Our deliverance may be near or it may be at a distance. Only this we may conclude, if we humble ourselves God will exalt us in due time. There is a deliverance and a set time. He will give deliverance here or hereafter. Sometimes He delivers and exalts some of His people in this life as a pledge to the rest that He will exalt them all in the life to come. He exalted Joseph, David, Mordecai and others, and He will exalt all that submit to His mighty hand in the life to come. It is better, therefore, implicitly to submit to Him and humble ourselves than to set limits to sovereignty and give directions to unerring wisdom. He knows what is best, and His time is the fittest. When people are under the hand of God they have many distressing cares, both in a spiritual and temporal view. Now, whatever our cares may be, we are to cast them upon Him. There may be too much slavish fear about the soul, and much distracting thoughts about the body. But whatever our cares are we are to cast them upon God. And we need not fear to do so, for He encourages us in His Word. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee.” And there is every reason why we should do so, for there is every fulness in Him to supply all wants, whether temporal or spiritual.

Verses 8, 9.—“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom

he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Scripture, we see clearly, reveals to us that there is a malignant being, called Satan or the devil, an evil spirit, who fell from his allegiance to God, and drew after him a great part of the angelic host into the same sin of apostacy and rebellion with himself. His great business is to do all the evil he can in the lower creation of God. He thwarts everything that is good and whatever promotes the Divine glory. The angels that fell with him carry on the same interest, and whatever they do is ascribed to him as their chief and the first great sinner. He has likewise enjoined all mankind in the same rebellion with himself. Such as are delivered from his thralldom and set their faces towards Zion he opposes with all his might: he pursues them with implacable rage, as the tyrant of Egypt pursued the Israelites, and wishes to bring them back again to the base slavery of sin. While people continue in sin they have no feeling of their galling chains. But when they feel them they begin to pray, and great is their need. They have a powerful and subtile enemy, compared here to a roaring lion, mad with rage and thirsting for blood; and no blood will satisfy him but the blood of souls. He wished to deprive them of their virtue, of their religion, and their concern for hereafter. And when this happened he made himself sure of them. He had outward and inward temptations in store for them, and they were such temptations as tried their faith and shook their constancy. They had the feelings of flesh and blood, and the world was an instrument in the hand of Satan to try them. They were in danger of their all if they did not yield and become apostates. Judge, Christian, how strong would this temptation be. Suppose an insinuating worldling made such a proposal to a Christian as the unrighteous King of Israel made to Naboth about his vineyard, and if he did not succeed in his scheme that he would threaten him with the destruction of his poor family in case he refuses. How foolish such a threat might prove, as the wretch might be hurried into eternity before the time he mentioned, yet it might prove a snare to a Christian. You have here, then, a picture of the state these Christians were in. They had a choice either to lose their farms or to forsake Christ. How awful the temptation. Now, Satan never wants his instruments to bring souls from Christ. But whether he comes by inward temptations or suggestions, or by wicked instruments, he is equally dangerous if we yield. Instead of this we are to resist all his temptations. The strongest inward temptation is unbelief; but let us consider

that the Scripture is true from the purity of its doctrine, the certainty of its prophesies, and the glory and splendour of the miracles it relates. The strongest outward temptation is to threaten us with death, poverty, and the destruction of our families. But here the language of Scripture cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of? Are you a Christian and afraid of man? Be not afraid; your prayers can bind up his hands. How often have the prayers of a Christian, when obliged to complain to heaven, brought an unprincipled wretch to the judgment seat before his time? He does not live to put his threat into execution. King David prayed against Ahithophel in the agony of his soul. The answer was an awful answer. You Christians are to pray against the schemes of your enemies and the enemies of God's glory. You are to pray that God would destroy their schemes and do good to their souls. The answer will be either their conversion or their destruction. We have two examples of this doctrine from Scripture, Ahithophel and the Apostle Paul. Nor are we singular in the temptations we may be exposed to. Other Christians drink of the same cup; and that we may effectually resist Satan we are to practice sobriety and watchfulness, and these graces will put life in our prayers. If a Christian happens to fall into intemperance, or if he falls off his guard, his prayers become dull and languid. The enemy is always on the watch, and has a snare for every soul, and for every place, and for every occasion. Let us then exercise faith and lean upon our Lord Jesus Christ, the Friend of souls.

Verse 10.—“But the God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

In these words the Apostle Paul puts up an earnest and affectionate prayer. The substance of the prayer is that their sufferings may be short and have a gracious issue. And this God was able to effect, as He was the God of all grace. He mentions this to encourage His people. They have trials to encounter and various troubles. But that Saviour who has called them to eternal glory will make His grace sufficient for them in every time of need. He is acquainted with their trials, and has a fellow-feeling, as He was Man, with all their afflictions. He has a hearing at the Court of Heaven, and when they apply to the throne of grace He procures their standing. Through His grace they conquer, and by His strength they are made perfect, established and settled. Christ is the foundation of grace, and there is a continual supply from this fountain for His people, and this grace was given and

secured for them in Him before the world began (2nd Tim. i. 9), and this makes their perseverance sure.

Verse 11.—“To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

The same honour and glory which is ascribed to God is ascribed in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments, to our incarnate Redeemer, the great Friend and Saviour of sinners. The same attributes, the same power, and the same works are ascribed to both, and in consequence the same worship also. This being the case, we have the strongest argument to believe in Christ, and to trust the keeping of our souls to Him as unto a faithful Creator. And to this doxology all the faithful people of God should say, Amen.

Verse 12.—“By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”

He recommends Silvanus, the person by whom he sent this short epistle, as a faithful brother. This was proper to procure authority to him, as it is serviceable to the good cause that people should have a respect for the ministers of the Gospel. And he informs and advises them. He informs them assuredly that the Christian religion was the true religion, that religion in which the true grace of God was to be found. We see from these words that the most eminent Christians stand in need of establishing them in the faith. Even John the Baptist found it necessary to send two of his followers to Christ to convince them of the divinity of his mission, which he did by referring them to the works which he performed, and which themselves did see. And we may appeal to Christians themselves to prove the excellency of our holy religion. It is a pure religion, and if we follow the rules of this holy religion it will make us happy. It is a joyful religion. How often have Christians felt joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this is not a blind, unmeaning joy, such as false religionists find in their devotions. It is a joy found in the truest reason. Christians know for what they are joyful. Their religion has been proved by incontestable miracles, and the great miracle of faith wrought in their hearts by the Spirit; and this faith bore down all false arguments before it broke down the strong corruptions of the heart and the enchanting love of the world. Now, when a person is so convinced of the truth of the Christian religion that himself believes and embraces it, and that he is in the road to heaven, that will greatly strengthen him to persevere. This faith, however, is not equally strong at all times. If so, why did the Apostle exhort and testify that they had the true religion

and ought to stand fast in their profession? If Christians were not subject to fits of unbelief as they are to other sins, through the corruption of their own heart and the temptations of Satan, this advice had been needless. It is necessary, therefore, very often to recommend the truth of the Christian religion by every argument of which it is capable.

Verse 13.—“The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son.”

He dates his epistle from Babylon, the head of the dispersion, and informs them that the Church, which was equally partakers of Divine grace and elected to everlasting life, as they were, had saluted them, as well as Mark, his spiritual son, and this shows us the true spiritual love that ought to subsist between Christian Churches that agree in the great fundamental points of faith and practice, even though they should happen to differ in lesser points and punctilios. It is the character of black bigotry and mean party spirit to put points that cannot be reckoned essential to salvation upon a footing with the great doctrines of our holy religion, and if people differ with them about the shibboleth of their party to cast them out of the Church. It is a fact, however, that the true Christian will embrace his brother in Christ, though they may not think alike in everything. That eminent and great man, Archbishop Usher, and the pious Mr Rutherford, of St Andrews, agreed like brethren, and the one preached in the pulpit of the other. The love of Christ is a Catholic love, and it embraces every child of God in its arms wherever they are. All true soldiers that serve our Sovereign will agree when they meet, though they have not all the same uniform. The day of battle will unite them to fight against the common enemy. The soldiers of Christ should do the same. Even in primitive times all the Churches did not agree in everything, but they agreed in two great points—Faith in Jesus Christ and love to one another, and all the Churches should follow them in this respect.

Verse 14.—“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

A kiss is a sign of friendship, kindness and love. And though it has been sometimes given for the worst of purposes, it was customary in these times and in these countries to give a holy kiss or a kiss of charity. But afterwards, owing to the corruption of human nature, that, as well as the feasts of love, were discontinued in the Church; and he concludes his epistle by wishing peace to all that were in Christ Jesus. Christ is the Prince of Peace, who procured peace by the shedding of

His blood; and those who believe in Him and are actuated by His Spirit have peace with God, and are members of His Kingdom. I shall conclude with some practical inferences.

(1) The government of the Christian Church is a humble government. The highest order in the days of the Apostles, as the persons that were to succeed them, is that of the Presbyters, and these Presbyters are commanded to do the duty of Bishops. The Apostle Peter, from whom all hierarchists pretend to derive their authority, command the Presbyters to rule the Church. They must therefore allow that they were the same order of men with the Bishops, or contradict the Apostles. Though the Bishop has become an overgrown animal since, it is well known that in the days of the Apostles he was only a preaching Presbyter, and did not pretend to assume any kind of authority over his co-presbyters.

(2) The reward which the Apostle here promises to the faithful Presbyters. He proposes to them to feed the Church of God, and that they were to receive a crown of glory from the Chief Shepherd; and in fact we find that the crown of glory is the most animating argument that can be urged to the faithful pastor. If pastors have a lower motive we cannot expect they will be faithful.

(3) The benefit of humility and submission to the Divine will. Our peace of mind and temporal happiness depend upon this grace. The humble person is content with many things that would raise the corruptions and excite the pride of the man who looks upon himself to be something. The humble person looks with indifference upon things that gall the feelings of a proud man. A single expression will set his mind on fire. And the appearance of an insult from an equal, or of contempt from a superior, will make him miserable. And why? Because he sees his happiness in things to which the humble Christian is quite indifferent.

(4) The best defence against the attacks of our spiritual enemy. Indeed, we are to put on the whole armour of God; but the Apostle here particularly recommends to us temperance, watchfulness, and prayer. The Apostle Paul recommends the spiritual panoply or whole armour of God; but we cannot successfully use it without these virtues and the exercise of the great duty of prayer. If God bestows grace, it is not to be dormant. We are to rise and exercise it if we would succeed in the spiritual warfare. The sober, watchful Christian will not give the enemy an advantage over him, as he is always prepared for the attack.

Lastly, it is a great pleasure to the good Christian to know that he has the true religion, and that it is the true

grace of God in which he stands. No other religion is capable of such proofs. He believes, and his faith is built upon a rock. He finds that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and these bear witness of Christ. He comes to Christ and submits to Him in all his offices. By so doing he finds that he has attained to solid and substantial peace. His faith influences his practice, and he knows by his own happy experience that the promises of the Gospel are real and substantial. He finds something of heaven on this side the grave. The Gospel can be proved by many arguments, but the strongest argument to a Christian is that he was once a sinner and is now a believer. It was the power of God that made him so. Faith purifies his heart and makes him strong against the world, flesh and devil. And thus he has the witness in himself. The feelings of a true Christian are not wild, unmeaning enthusiasm : it is the faith of God's elect.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On I. CORINTHIANS. x. 3

I Cor. x. 3—"And did all eat the same spiritual meat."

THE history of Scripture is a history of wonders and miracles. But these wonders, which were necessary in the infant state of the Church, were preparing the minds of the people for believing the great promise of the Messiah, which was to be accomplished in due time. This Gospel was preached to them in ceremonies and types of various kinds. And the Apostle in this epistle informs the Corinthians that the Israelites had the things signified by the sacraments as well as they had. The manna in the wilderness and the water of the rock had a spiritual meaning, as well as the bread and wine in the Christian Church. It is clear, then, from these words that the faithful saw Christ in the types of the Old Testament. And such as made a bad use of the Gospel which was then typically preached to them were severely punished. And if so how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? In speaking further upon these words I shall—

- (1) Give you the history to which this alludes.
- (2) In what respects the manna was a type of Christ.
- (3) The duty of all to whom this precious food is offered.

(1) The history to which this alludes. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt and God, by the ministry of Moses, led them through the Red Sea, He brought them to the wilderness of Arabia. The wilderness was a barren place; there were no fields of corn or fruit-bearing trees, and the people had a longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, the onions, the leeks, and the garlic upon which they fed when there. When they came to the wilderness they felt and did complain of their situation, upon which God gave a gracious and an immediate answer to them. There are some cases that require a very sudden answer, such as Hezekiah got and the sisters of Lazarus. And this is necessary, else poor souls would be ready to faint and despair. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had to exercise patience, but the calls of hunger and thirst admit of no delay, and therefore the answer is given without loss of time. And here we may justly observe that whatever straits God brings His people into, He relieves them in an ordinary or extraordinary manner. Had the children of Israel only

adverted to the pillar or the cloud, they needed be in no concern about their daily bread. The manna was an extraordinary kind of food. And though there is an ordinary kind of it in some countries which is good for medicine, it only falls in certain seasons of the year. But the manna of the Israelites was miraculous, as it was so plentiful as to support an army of 600,000 men, besides women and children, and fell at all seasons for forty years together, till they came to the land of Canaan, and then it ceased when they got the food of the country.

(2) In what respects the manna was a type of Christ. Our Lord, in the 6th of John, informs us clearly that it was so, for He calls Himself the bread that came down from heaven. And that it was so we shall find by the following things :—

1. In its origin—it fell from heaven.
2. Its nature and qualities.
3. Its use and effects.

1. In its origin—it fell from heaven. It descended like the dew round the camp, and thus it became food and refreshment to their souls and bodies. It surely refreshed the souls of believers in the camp. They were the true seed of Abraham, who rejoiced to see Christ's day afar off. And we have cause to believe that the pious Israelites saw Christ, the bread of life, in the type of the manna. And as the manna fell like the dew, God informs us that He will be like the dew to Israel. The influences of grace are compared to the dew. They refresh and strengthen and beautify the souls of His people; the manna also fed and refreshed their bodies. It was a wholesome, a sweet and delicate food. Unbelievers saw it only as bodily food, and while they took this view of it how could it refresh their souls? The manna descended from heaven, and in this respect was a type of the glorious Messiah who was to descend from heaven and become Man, that He might become a sacrifice upon which our souls were to feed and to live for ever. The manna was procured not by the industry of man; it was given freely by God. And Christ was given freely. He is the gift of God to sinners. "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given," not because we deserved such a gift, but because our misery required, and we stood in need of, such a gift for our perishing souls. The profane Israelites despised the manna, as the wicked do to this day. But it was the food provided by God for supporting their life, and there is no name given under heaven by which we can be saved but the name of Christ. It was given in the wilderness when they left Egypt. And when God redeems His people from this evil world He feeds their souls with the

heavenly manna, for there is power in the Word to quicken, invigorate, strengthen and cheer poor, perishing sinners.

2. The manna was a type of Christ in its nature and qualities. It was of a white colour, of a pleasant and sweet taste. Now, Christ is said to be white and ruddy. He was innocent and perfectly holy in His nature and in His life. He was holy, harmless and undefiled, and separate from sinners, though He lived among them. He was free from every stain. The manna was likewise sweet; and the fruit of Christ, the tree of life, is sweet to our taste. The fruits of His bitter passion and death are sweet to poor, lost sinners. Reconciliation, pardon, peace and acceptance are joyful sounds, and sweet to the spiritual taste. The manna supported the natural life, but the true manna not only quickens the soul at first but supports the spiritual life, and whosoever tastes it shall never die.

3. It was a type of Christ in its use and effects. It was given to the people in order to feed them, and Christ is given to sinners in order that they may have everlasting life. It was given to the whole congregation, and every man was welcome to gather that precious food. And surely the true bread of life is freely offered to all. Rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, are welcome to come, without exception, to Jesus Christ. Though there were many unworthy characters in the camp of Israel, they were not excluded from this heavenly gift. And no unworthiness needs keep sinners from the food of their souls. We are not to enclose the manna with a fence, for Christ is the Rose of Sharon, and therefore open to all. The natural manna groweth in several places, among others in a certain district of Italy. One of the Kings of Naples, in order to secure a tax upon the manna, enclosed the place with a fence. Upon this the manna ceased. When the experiment was repeatedly tried they left the manna open to all. Nor must we exclude great sinners by raising a fence of unbelief about the manna of the Gospel, or even a fence of duties and privileges to keep them from Christ. We must not say to the work of our hands, "Ye are our gods." Many, like the foolish artist who fell in love with a statue, the work of his own hands, are so taken up with their own doings that they are not willing to be indebted to free grace. These are like the profane Israelites, who despised the manna, and would prefer the flesh-pots of Egypt to the heavenly food. The manna was prepared in several ways. But in whatever manner it was dressed it was found to be a delicate and wholesome food for every palate, and whatever spiritual situation we are in the Gospel brings health and joy and consolation to our souls. It is likely that the manna was such wholesome

food that the Israelites did not stand in need of medicine all the time they were in the desert. And it is certain that the Gospel is spiritual food and medicine to souls. Do we find ourselves dull and heavy in a dead and stupid frame? The Gospel addresses us—"Awake thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." If we are sorrowful, the Gospel gives us comfort by assuring us that God will not despise the humble and contrite heart. The Gospel likewise exhorts us, if we are afflicted to pray, and if we are merry to sing Psalms. Thus, whatever situation we are in, the Gospel meets us to give us spiritual advice or spiritual comfort. But to some we are told the manna bred worms and stank. In like manner those who hear the Gospel with unbelieving hearts and aversion to what they hear, it will breed worms in their consciences that will torment their souls for ever.

3. The third thing proposed was the duty of all to whom this precious food is offered. We are principally concerned with the spiritual meaning of the manna. Now, the Israelites though they could contribute nothing towards procuring this precious food for themselves, yet when it was given them they were called upon to perform a particular duty. They are desired to gather it early, for when the sun waxed hot it melted. And we are to seek the Kingdom of God in the first place. The manna was their food, and if they did not gather it they must starve.

1. Our duty, then, in the first place, is to believe our lost state and our need of this heavenly food.
2. We are to gather it, and to do this, in the first place, in preference to everything else.
3. As the Israelites laid up some of the manna in a golden pot before the Lord in the holy place, we are to keep and lay up Christ in the golden vessel of our hearts, and be thinking of Him continually.

1. Our duty, then, in the first place is to believe our lost state and our need of this heavenly food. Sin has left the soul in a dead and torpid state, without spiritual life, sense or motion. While in this condition there is no appetite for the feast of the Gospel. But when the Word touches the soul and the man takes concern for his spiritual and everlasting state, he is then awake to his true spiritual interest. He then believes that the Gospel is the food, the raiment, and the riches of his soul. And this excites a desire in him after the Gospel. And this desire is called a hunger and a thirst in Scripture. Wherever this desire is excited people find a satisfaction in the Gospel, preferable to any pleasure they can have in any worldly enjoyment. They believe that this is the true food of their souls, and that without it they must be miserable.

And if they are without it for ever they must be miserable for ever. The belief of this spiritual truth is the first step of their happiness. If the Gospel, then, is the food and happiness of our souls, it may be asked, Why do not all men of sense and learning believe and embrace the Gospel? To this it may be answered that we often see men of sense and learning take strong liquor, that makes them inattentive to their temporal interest and often brings on premature death. Now, the power of any passion may intoxicate the mind as well as the love of liquor, and make it inattentive to anything but the gratification of that passion. Covetousness, sensuality, and a constant circle of idle diversions will keep the mind in a constant hurry, and render it inattentive to the things of eternity. Immersed, however, as wicked people are in the cares and pleasures of this life, they have their moments of anxiety and misery, and then they have a wishful eye to religion. But they are bewitched by the next draught of pleasure or the next plan of profit, till at last they are swallowed up by the whirlpool, and so are lost for ever.

2. We are to gather it, and we are to do this in preference to everything else. Manna was the food that God prepared for the children of Israel in the wilderness. As it fell early, to gather it was the first work they were to perform. If they were to neglect the morning, when the sun waxed hot it melted, and they would fast for a whole day by overlooking the precious opportunity. The manna fell every day, and they must watch it when it fell. And we have the Gospel daily among us. We ought, therefore, to seek the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness in the first place. The day we neglect to gather the heavenly manna we lose it for that time. We have not the motions of the Spirit and golden opportunities always in our power. The hurry of business, the calls of pleasure and profit, like the sun melting the manna, will throw religion out of our thoughts, and it may cost us many prayers before we make up our loss. When the Church neglected to open the door to Christ, it cost her many weary steps before she found Him again. If we consider religion as a secondary business that must yield to the world we mistake it entirely. If we believe anything of the Gospel at all we must confess that we ought to be actuated by the Spirit of Christ. And He says that His meat and His drink was to do the will of God. He wrought assiduously at religion. His work was to save the souls of others, and the work assigned for us is to give our own souls by gathering the heavenly manna, and thus laying hold of eternal life. And this must be the first and the principal work of every Christian every day of his life. No excuse hindered an Israelite from gathering the manna. And if we are willing to coin excuses that will hinder us from

the great duties of religion we are not in earnest in the work. Felix had not time; the young ruler had a farm, and the people of Galilee were too busy to attend to religion. It must, however, be our main business, for it is the food of our souls. The Saviour of the world never hindered people from working with their hands; but let us hear His own words—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

3. As the Israelites laid up some of the manna in a golden pot before the Lord in the holy place, we are to lay up and keep Christ in the golden vessel of our hearts and be thinking of Him continually.

This command was given to Aaron, and it was typical of something in the future. These things were written for the edification of the Church in ages to come. It points out to us the duties of faith. It is the duty of faith to receive Christ into the heart. The manna was put into a golden pot, and Christ must have our choicest affections. He must be the daily subject of our thoughts, and we are to offer up to Him the best things we have. Like the wise men of the East, we must give Him our gold, our frankincense, and our myrrh. That is, we are to give up to Him the things that we reckon most precious. Not like the men of the world, who offer Him the refuse of everything they have and possess. We must give Him the very best. Worldly people grudge Him even the refuse itself. Very often they give Him nothing but the dung of their sacrifices, for upon the Lord's Day God Almighty sees and hears nothing with them but the dung of their worldly discourse and their worldly thoughts in the house of prayer. But God threatens the wicked that he will spread dung upon their faces, the dung of their solemn feasts, and curse their blessings (Malachi ii. 2, 3). This threatening was originally against churchmen, but it will prove true against all the wicked. God promised to make the Israelites a nation of priests, and the Apostle Peter applies it to Christians. People that come to the house of prayer should take heed lest they fall under the censure and curse mentioned here. The good Christian is careful to offer his heart to God, and will give Jesus Christ his Lord the most sacred seat in the temple of his heart. His thoughts about the Saviour are delightful to his soul. As there were sacrifices offered in the temple, incense was likewise offered. And the temple, a type of the Church, is called the Mountain of Myrrh and the Hill of Frankincense. In like manner we are to offer up our souls and bodies and all that we have in self-denial to God. And we are also to offer up the truest incense of prayer without ceasing. And as the incense was offered upon the altar, we may offer up our prayers in the prevailing name of our great

Mediator. Our prayers are to be performed and perfumed by the merits and intercession of Christ. And thus we are daily to feed upon Christ as our heavenly manna and the everlasting food of our souls. I conclude with some practical inferences.

(1) We may learn from this history of that precious food that we are daily to gather the heavenly manna to feed our souls. The manna fell in the wilderness, and no doubt it fell in several places at once. But wherever they found it they were to gather this wholesome and precious food. And we must seek Christ in all the means of grace. When He was upon earth He met His followers in several places. Sometimes He met them in the temple, sometimes in the wilderness. At one time we see Him preaching to the ignorant peasants of Galilee, and at another time to the learned and polite inhabitants of Jerusalem. He preaches at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, in the house of the Pharisee and publican at a feast, and at the grave of Lazarus. We see Him at one time in a ship, at another time on land. He is at one time on a mountain, and we find Him again in the plain. But wherever He goes His true disciples follow Him; whereas the generality of the Jewish nation go and hear Him when they find it convenient, or when He comes near their houses. It is so to this day. Many hear sermons because they dare not work. People may have several reasons for coming to church without any view to meet the Saviour. That is far from their thoughts. But they do not follow Him wherever He goes in all the means of grace. And this proves the rottenness and unsoundness of their hearts and professions.

Lastly—We learn from the history of the manna that no other food can feed the soul but Jesus Christ. If the Israelites did not gather the manna they must perish with hunger. And the Scripture informs us that there is no name by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Earthly pleasures may give a kind of empty satisfaction to the mind, till death opens the man's eyes, and then he will find to his everlasting regret that he fed upon the husks of the swine. The cup of pleasure and the bread of deceit will have a naseous and a most bitter taste at death. And if a man lays an unsure and false foundation and substitutes anything in the place of Christ he must lie down in sorrow. But if a man did chose Christ for his portion, he shall feed upon the heavenly manna in his way through the wilderness, and the pillar of cloud will direct him till he arrives at the heavenly Canaan and is introduced to the New Jerusalem. He shall then see the King in His beauty and the land which he now sees to be far off. May God prepare us for this happy sight and bless His Word to our souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

On JOHN ii. 4, and JOHN vii. 6

John ii. 4—"My hour is not yet come." John vii. 6—"My time is not yet come."

OUR Lord was called to a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The wine was ended. The blessed Virgin spoke to the Saviour, and from His manner of expression it would appear that she hoped He would exert His power. But though it was His blessed mother that solicited Him, He gave her to understand that she must patiently wait God's appointed and set time. When His brethren desired Him to go up to the feast He made them the same answer. The doctrine from the words is that though our impatience would urge us to have our answer presently, God Almighty has a set time, and has made it our duty to wait till that time comes, however far off it may be. The men of the world who seek their happiness here get their wishes often soon accomplished, but the children of promise who get their answer through prayer will patiently wait God's appointed time. In speaking upon these words I shall

1. Show what may be properly called our time.
2. That however long we may be kept pleading, He that promised will come and will not tarry.
3. That there is a set time when He will come, and, therefore, that we ought to wait.

1. What may be properly called our time. The Christian, above all things, is to pray for spiritual things; but it may be likewise his duty to pray for things that are temporal. We are taught to pray for our daily bread as well as for the spread of the Gospel. We read in Scripture of several of the saints that were praying for temporal things. And when they come through prayer they become spiritual. They do so because they exercise the faith and patience of the people of God. But whatever they pray for they have their own time, and they may be deceived when they think it is near. It is likely that our general mother Eve made such a mistake, for she seemed to have been of opinion, when Cain was born, that he was the promised seed. Several commentators are of opinion that she made this mistake, and it is certain

that many saints under the patriarchal and Mosaical ages were looking for him. And in regard to temporal and spiritual troubles, they were looking for relief long before it came. Now, our time is—(1) The time of distress and fear. When a person is in distress he has his unbelief and his fear. Whether this distress is about his soul or about his outward circumstances, it brings him to his knees and makes him to fly to the throne of grace for an answer. And this is the time of the creature, but it may not be yet the time appointed by God. When the creature feels distress he wishes for an answer, but notwithstanding it may not be a proper time, and he may be made to wait longer. The answer may be delayed so long that we may (2) think it a time of unlikelihood. This was the case with Abraham himself, but as the promise was received, it encouraged him to plead and look for an answer. Though the promise was delayed, freedom at a throne of grace enabled him to wait with patience, (3) And when there is the hope after prayer. This forms a presumption that the time is near. Notwithstanding this he may be made to wait still longer, and no appearance of an answer to be seen in spiritual things, not even felt, for these may be temptations and felt hardness after freedom. We may naturally conclude that Abraham, Joseph and David, those favourites of Providence, had often comfort in their souls respecting the answer of their prayers during the long interval that their souls were depending. And it is likely, from what Joseph said to the butler, that he thought his deliverance and answer were near. Joseph, however, must wait some years longer, and all the prayers of Joseph could not bring relief before God's time for the answer of prayer. Again, we may call it our time when we are on the point of giving up. "I said in my haste," said the Psalmist, "that all men are liars." At another time he hastily concluded that he would fall one day into the hands of Saul. Even Abraham, though at first he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet afterwards he was of opinion that Eliezer of Damascus would be his heir. Were not the Israelites at the Red Sea near the point of despair a little before a passage is opened through the Red Sea to effect their deliverance, and this was an earnest of an answer of prayer and of their settlement in the land of promise. And to name no more, what situation may we suppose were the Apostles in when they saw the death and burial of their Lord and Master? Surely their hopes were at a low ebb and the answer of prayer seemed to have been gone for ever. And in every age of the Church how often has the answer of prayer been delayed so long that the faith and patience of His people have been almost exhausted. The instances are innumerable. But after all

God proved their help, and that right early. What awful persecutions did our own National Church endure for twenty-eight long, dark years! How many ardent petitions, how many earnest prayers did she put up to heaven during that periods. And yet the prospect was very dark even a little before her deliverance. At last God's good time did come, and set her free by the glorious revolution from the scourge of arbitrary power and the unprincipled rage of hierarchal tyranny. The glorious revolution brought liberty to the Church and State. And in some cases still the answer of prayer is connected with some remarkable interposition of Providence.

Our time is the time of disappointment after disappointment. One of the mistakes into which good men may fall is that the answer of prayer is to be brought about by means and endeavours. This opinion makes them very legal in their spirits, and lean much to the covenant of works. They think that reason and commonsense will justify them in these thoughts. In spiritual things they think that a vigorous prosecution of the means will bring comfort to their souls. Comfort is denied them, and why? They depend upon their endeavours the very time they may harbour some idol in their thoughts. As to the temporal things, they think that man has to do his own share. Though this be true they met with disappointment because they make flesh their arm and trust in their own exertions. The answer is delayed, and all their broken reeds deceive them till such time as they entirely depend upon the everlasting arms of the great Jehovah.

Lastly, our time is when we think now or never. "It is time to work," saith the Psalmist. Moses, about the space of 40 years before the deliverance of his brethren, killed an Egyptian and hid him in the sand. This was Moses' time, and he thought it should be God's time also, if ever He meant to save His people. Sarah thought it was time for her to have an answer of prayer, now or never, and therefore gave Hagar to Abraham that she might have children by her, and Rachel gave Belhah to Jacob. But our premature endeavours and exertions will not hasten the promise or forward the answer of prayer. We are to do duty and leave the event in his hands. We are to fill the water pots; it is the Saviour alone that can convert the water into wine. Even the Virgin Mary herself, the mother of Christ, cannot get her answer before the time, though she might naturally think now was the fit time when the wine was run out.

2. However long we may be kept pleading, He that promised will come and will not tarry.

The answer may be delayed long; it may try our faith and weary our patience. Accordingly, the Psalmist advises those who wait upon God not to fret. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. And when the delay is very long it may create a ferment in the passions. But notwithstanding the delay, He that promised will come and will not tarry. God is not a wilderness, nor is it a vain thing to wait upon Him, for such shall not be put to shame. That there will be a gracious answer is clear from the following argument:—

First, it is clear from Scripture, from reason and the attributes of God. There is a connection between prayer and the answer of prayer. “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” And again—“Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” I need not multiply texts—it is the universal, uniform doctrine of Scripture. We see through the whole sacred pages that prayer and patience have a gracious issue. We find, indeed, that the delay may be long, but the answer is sure. And when there are many prayers and long delay the answer is generally marked by some signal interposition of Providence. This happened to the Israelites in their return from Egypt and Babylon. It happened also to many of the Old Testament saints. And we have as good grounds to expect an answer as they had. And we have the additional encouragement to see their example and the great reward of their patience and hope. Thus we may see the footsteps of the flock before us, and if we follow them we shall inherit the promises. And we should consider gracious answers in temporal things as an earnest of greater matters. He gave us His Son; He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from His people who walk uprightly before Him. Reason itself will teach us to argue from the attributes of God that the promises of Scripture will be accomplished in due time. He has goodness, power and truth, and His Word assures us that these will be exerted to reward those who believe, wait and obey. In seeking temporal as well as spiritual things from God, it will naturally make those who wait humble and resigned. It will make them forsake sin, because they are asking a favour. And it will bring them to the foot of the cross, because it is there they have cause to look up for an answer.

2. We can prove this from analogy. As it is in nature, so it is also in grace. As we sow, so shall we also reap. The seed of prayer is not of a quick growth. It is like that precious grain the wheat. It is sown late in the year, and it bears the winter storms. But though it is long growing, it yields a rich and plentiful crop to the husbandman, and it will abundantly reward his pains. Wheat is the best of vegetables. Its

growth is slow, but it is sure. The good things of worldly men are of quick growth. Like Jonah's gourd, they come up in a night and perish in a night. The good things that come through prayer are pure and permanent. They are long on the way, but the cause is obvious. We are corrupt, and prayer brings us to the fountain of salvation. And the more we are purified the more we are qualified to receive an answer. Thus when God was to work a miracle for the Israelites by drying up the Jordan before them, they are required to sanctify themselves that the Lord might do wonders among them. And though we cannot expect miracles, we are warranted to look for Divine interposition and the leadings of Providence. In this sense the pillar of cloud as surely directs the people of God now as it directed the Israelites in the wilderness. And the pillar will lead by a round-about way. It could lead them to Canaan in a few weeks, but it took them 40 years. But though the time was long the direction was safe and sure.

We can prove this from the experience of all the Lord's people. If we put ourselves under Divine conduct we must follow Divine direction. It is the good old way in which all the saints did walk. It is the way of holiness, and the fools will not miss their way. He that believeth shall not make haste. Faith follows the Saviour, submits to His direction and follows the cloud, and is ready to wait its heavenly motions. And as this was the experience of God's people in all ages, it was the experience of our Lord Himself. He followed the pillar and it led him to the Red Sea. It was through many tribulations He entered into the kingdom prepared for Him. And when He was upon earth the way in which He gave temporal relief to His followers had a direct tendency to make them trust in God. And whatever comes in that way must be sweet to the Christian. The land of promise was doubly pleasant to the children of Israel, because they got it as a gift from God.

3. There is a set time when He will come, and therefore we ought to wait. He has a set time for loosing spiritual bands and answering temporal petitions. What He does is founded in the truest reason : it is in mercy and merely on our own account that He delays His answer.

(1) As to grace or spiritual things. Is it comfort we ask? We are not yet prepared for it, and therefore it is denied us in mercy. Two things hinder our comfort. We are not sufficiently humbled. We may indulge iniquity in our hearts; we are not humbled. We may think that we are, but it is evident by our conduct that we are not. We may discover this by the dispensations of Providence and our conduct to-

wards our fellow-creatures. When God afflicts us with sickness, with poverty, or afflictions of any kind, how beats the pulse of the soul? Alas! we fret and complain; we do not submit to the yoke or behave calmly under the cross; and this shows that we are not sufficiently humbled. We may discover it by our conduct to our fellow-creatures. When we are accused do we forgive? Do we pray for our enemies? Do we resist, or do we seek redress or revenge? Alas! our hands can tell that when we are struck upon one cheek we do not turn the other. Instead of being of a meek and humble spirit, we feel high and aspiring thoughts. Instead of following the motions of the Spirit of God, we only show that we have only the spirit of a man. And when we are not humbled how can we expect to be comforted? God's time is not come, and it is evident to us that we are not prepared to receive what we are praying for. A cross child is crying for a new coat; he is desired to go and wash himself and throw off his old coat, and then he will get the new. While he refuses to obey he cannot get what he asks. Again, we may indulge some iniquity in our hearts, and this may hinder our comfort and delay our answer. This was David's view of the matter, and it must be less or more the experience of all the people of God. This stumbling block should be removed before we can expect an answer.

(2) If it is temporal mercy or blessing that we ask, let us then take notice that He has set down general rules. He is the God of order. The material world is ordered with the utmost regularity. He counteth the number of the stars and knoweth all their names. He knows the uses and ends for which they are designed. He knows their motions, the laws by which they are governed, and superintends everything about them. And in this inferior creation His providence is concerned in the minutest concerns of all His creatures. The fall of sparrows and the numbering of the hairs of our head are under His eye. And if so, surely the most precious things are under His direction. When the seed is sown we do not expect a crop immediately. There is a set time for its growth and ripening before we cut it down and lay it up in our store-houses. And there is a set time for an answer of prayer. The Psalmist (Psalm cii. 13), speaking of the Church, says—"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her; yea the set time is come." Now, we may be praying for some temporal concern, but God sees something that we do not. The children of Israel, though they had a Divine promise, could not enter the land of Canaan till the iniquity of the Amorites was full. The answer of prayer is a beautiful piece of work, and no tradesman we know will lay

by his work while it wants a pin. And God will delay His answer till He gives it complete. Though Queen Esther was the means appointed to save the people of God, she could not do so till the time came. The plot must be first ready for their destruction, and a general cry to heaven to overthrow it throughout the dominions of Ahasuerus. The Queen herself must be humbled in the dust and set apart for some time for fasting and prayer. And when the answer came it was attended by such circumstances as will astonish all that hear the story.

IMPROVEMENT.

Is there a set time for our answer? I conclude with a three-fold advice.

1. Urge your suit.
2. Wait with patience.
3. Go on in the plain path of duty, and use no undue means.

1. Urge your suit. Whatever you pray for which may be for the glory of God and the good of your soul, though the answer may be delayed, use importunity and perseverance. The exercise of faith and patience will purify the soul and strengthen us in the ways of God. It makes us to depend upon God Himself and not upon human means, and this is a wholesome thing for the soul.

2. Wait with patience. Consider, then, this is the way in which the children in general are used. Great is the reward of patience. Even in temporal things whatever is obtained by prayer is better than a thousand things that people get by mere common Providence. Isaac had one wife and Solomon had a thousand. Rebecca was better than them all. She came by prayer, and Solomon took his without Divine permission. Boaz had one son; he was the child of prayer. Haman had ten sons, and they were prepared for the gallows. But Boaz's son was the child of prayer and the child of promise. He prospered in the world, and his soul was prepared for the joys of heaven.

3. Lastly, go on in the plain path of duty. Do not use any undue means; possess your soul in patience and do not fret. The answer will give you joy and comfort when it comes. The answer of all your prayers will be everlasting joy in heaven. The temporal blessings will also give you comfort when it comes. Isaac gave joy to Abraham, and Rebecca gave joy to Isaac. He might have got quickly a bad

creature if he had taken her in a hurry. By waiting God's time he got a jewel and a blessing. Though our Lord said to His mother, the blessed Virgin, that His hour was not come, it was very near. Wait, then, Christian, and your water shall be turned into wine.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On GENESIS iii. 14-15

Genesis iii. 14, 15—"And the Lord said unto the serpent, 'Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly thou shalt go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.' "

THIS is the first Gospel that ever was preached and the fountain head of the promises. Scripture informs us that God created man in His own image. As man was thus created holy, he was therefore happy. He was planted in a paradise of delights. Paradise, the most beautiful spot upon earth, was a most pleasant habitation, and by the description given of it in the chapter immediately preceding it would appear that it was also very large. It was a fit dwelling-place for the Lord of the inferior creation and the parent of the human race. Furnished with the graces of the Holy Spirit, He was placed here to delight Himself continually in God, and to worship, serve and obey Him without ceasing. To show him that he was but a creature, and therefore dependent upon his Maker, he was prohibited from tasting the fruit of one tree. He was sovereign of the world besides. But the great adversary of God, who is called the old serpent and a murderer from the beginning, tempted him to rebel against God and eat the forbidden fruit. After the fatal transgression the voice of God was heard in the garden, and the first bold transgressor is summoned before Him. The man and his wife reluctantly obey the summons, and appear trembling before their Judge. Instead of meeting Him with their usual joy and confidence, they hide themselves in the garden. We do not read that they shed a tear or made any supplication to their Judge. And, indeed, it is not easy to conceive how guilty criminals could think of mercy till they heard the joyful sound of the Gospel. In fact, we know that when guilt fastens upon the conscience how difficult a person finds it for him to believe, although he has often heard the promises. The three criminals anxiously stand to hear their doom. And with what joy and astonishment may we suppose

our trembling first parents heard the dark and mystical promise. The words are addressed to the Grand Apostate, and no doubt it must have added to his misery to hear that the seed of that woman whom he deceived would hereafter trample him under his feet. In the words just now read we have here—

1. The punishment inflicted upon Satan:
2. The joyful promise of a great Deliverer.
3. That this promise belongs exclusively to that part of the human race who are here called the woman's seed.

1. The punishment inflicted upon Satan. God speaks here in dark and enigmatical expressions. He speaks to the grand adversary as connected with the instrument he employed to ruin the human race. Common-sense will not permit us to suppose that God Almighty meant only the brute creature, called the serpent. That they have a higher meaning is clear from other parts of Scripture. Satan is called the dragon, the old serpent and the murderer. He is likewise called a liar and the father of lies. By his sting and poison he murdered the human race, and subjects them to every kind of misery, temporal and spiritual. It was by his lies and deceit he beguiled Eve, and it is highly probable that it was by his lies he deceived, or at least prevented, all the fallen angels who partook of his guilt and punishment. And, of course, the first part of his punishment is that he is declared to be cursed. And as he is cursed himself, his only pleasure is to bring a curse upon others and involve them in the same misery with himself. And he has succeeded but too well. Another part of his punishment is that he would go upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life. Satan was once an angel of light. He delighted in holy thoughts and in singing the praises of God. But sin has given him a grovelling taste. As it has thrown him to the earth, it has made his thoughts earthly, sensual, devilish. The dust is his food, his pleasure is in earthly pursuits and in the sins of earthly-minded sinners. The sweetest morsel of the devil is the earthly conduct and conversation of the wicked. His thoughts are low, for he never rises to heavenly contemplation. And when he gets mankind, like the mole and sow, to be burrowing constantly in the earth, he has the only pleasure of which he is capable. Now, when men seek no other pleasure than what the dust can give them they furnish a sweet morsel for the devil. When men are mere earth-worms they are then his proper food. How awful, then, is the situation of worldly sinners. When their souls are full to the brim of worldly thoughts he will then swallow them up, soul and body, for ever. We are likewise here informed that he is to eat this kind of food all the days of his

life. Now, the days of Satan's life as a deceiving serpent, dragon, murderer and liar is from the day he deceived Adam till the time of the last judgment. He is to feed till then upon the vices and wickedness of mankind. People that seek their pleasures in the dust are his food, and by a just judgment they are permitted by God to furnish by their worldly conduct a delicious repast for their greatest enemy. Let those, then, who have a voracious appetite for the large things of the dust consider what they are doing. They furnish food for the serpent. People must be very ignorant indeed if they do not know that God hath cursed this earth. And the more people gather of this curse by making it their portion the more they gather of fuel to burn them. Satan is incapable of heavenly pleasure. The only pleasure he has is in that part of mankind who are like himself. If we are to believe Scripture, then, people who seek their happiness in the dust belong to Satan. The man, then, who is constantly looking down to the earth, instead of looking up to heaven, is the devil's drudge, and will get his share of the fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Another heavy part of the punishment of the devil is the enmity there is between him and the woman and between his seed and the woman's seed.

This is a dreadful part of his punishment. The moment he heard the promise he took an irreconcilable hatred to Eve. But he hated her seed in particular. We shall hear in the next head who is the seed of the woman. The serpent has also a seed, and there are wicked, worldly men, and these hate godly people and have a pleasure in speaking ill of them. They feed upon their dung. Good people have the dung of faults, failings and weaknesses. Now, he must be an unclean animal that feeds upon filth. Dogs and swine feed upon filth and carrion. The pleasant food of wicked men is the sins of good Christians. Like street cleaners, they gather in heaps all the stories they can against them, and this is their food. How malignant and unclean their taste! A man may know, then, whether he is a child of the devil by this test. Has he pleasure in speaking against the people of God and keeping them from their duty? If his heart tells a wicked man that this is his picture, he is the seed of the serpent, for he inherits his poison.

2. The second thing proposed was the joyful promise of a great Deliverer. And the great Deliverer is here eminently called the seed of the woman. Though the promise was couched in dark expressions it could not fail to give joy to the persons immediately concerned. They saw a door of hope opened, though they could not explain the promise. Now this promise runs through all the promises of the New and Old Testaments. Though our first parents could not com-

prehend the promise, the event has made it clear. Other Scriptures explain it to us. He is the very same person who was afterwards called the seed of Abraham, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Let us then advert to the things that are said of this glorious Personage.

1. He is called the seed of the woman.
2. The seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent.
3. The serpent was to bruise his heel. These things were exactly and gloriously fulfilled in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1. Our Lord was called the seed of the woman. He was born of a pure and spotless virgin, and He became Man that He might suffer and purchase His people by His blood. He did not become Man like the rest of His brethren by ordinary generation, but in consequence of a new promise made to our first parents after they had sinned. He was eminently Eve's seed and the most glorious of all her offspring. Satan thought that he might boast that he had poisoned and ruined the human race by the fall of their weak and frail general mother. Eve, then, was the mother of all living, not merely because she was the general mother of mankind, but more especially because she was the mother of the second Adam, who was to be a quickening spirit. And even Adam himself, though the father and representative of all mankind, was the spiritual seed of the woman by virtue of this glorious promise. From Eve descended Christ; from Christ, as the head of the spiritual seed, descended Adam. And Adam is obliged to Eve, for she had the honour that Christ is eminently called the woman's seed. And in Christ all His people, as His spiritual seed, are considered as the seed of the woman.

2. The seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent. The New Testament will explain to us the language of the Old. We are told there that Satan is a murderer, and he is called the old serpent and the devil. He effected this great murder by his deceit and lies as a serpent. The promise here, then, was that the seed of the woman was to bruise his head. The event has made this promise clear. Jesus, the Son of God, who was in His bosom from all eternity, came to the world in the fulness of time, suffered for His people, and thus destroyed the work of the devil. The works of Satan are

- (1) Darkness and ignorance.
- (2) Deceit and violence.
- (3) All kinds of sins and worldly lusts. By destroying these Christ has broken Satan's strength, and thus bruised his head.

(1) He has destroyed darkness and ignorance by the bright light of his glorious Gospel. In all the countries which the Gospel has visited it has brought light, joy and salvation to immortal souls plunged formerly in sin and immersed in ignorance. But an objection may arise here. Do we not see thousands of those who live under the Gospel perfectly ignorant of its saving truths, and others as full of worldliness and wickedness as they can hold? How, then, can it be said that the Gospel has broken Satan's head where it has appeared? Though we must acknowledge this melancholy truth, yet it is a fact that Christ has broken Satan's head upon the cross. And notwithstanding the many healing plaisters which the serpent's seed, that is, all wicked men, have applied to heal their father's head, it still bleeds, and will at last bleed to death. Take notice that God does not say here that all mankind would be saved. No, for we are told that the serpent would have a seed, and that seed will do all that they can to support their father's interest and his kingdom in the world. When the Gospel touches them they do all they can to counteract the heavenly medicine. This is a kind of healing to the devil at the time; but it will increase his pain, as well as their own, to all eternity.

(2) Deceit and violence. Satan supports his kingdom by deceit, and to this he adds the sword. All false religions have been supported by lies and knavery, and propagated by the sword. This is eminently true with regard to Paganism of old, and Popery and Mahomedanism. In the days of the Gospel, Satan roared like a lion; he caused shed the blood of the saints. But in spite of all his acts his head has been broken. Paganism fell, and Popery and Islamism, like old, decayed buildings, are shaking upon their bases and threatening a fall, and their fall cannot now be far off. The Gospel will prevail at last, and conquer by its native purity and lustre.

(3) All kinds of sins and worldly lusts. And it is a clear case that the kingdom of Satan is supported among men by ignorance, falsehood and worldly lusts, and wicked men support these to the utmost of their power. By the combined effects of falsehood and riches and power they have found out the art of becoming knaves, adulterers, and murderers. They think themselves safe and secure, independent of the laws of Church and State. And some may die in that condition, like the rich man in the Gospel. But Christ will destroy the head of Satan in His own people and incorrigible rebels shall be ultimately cast out of His kingdom.

3. This promise exclusively belongs to that part of the human race who are here called the woman's seed. The glorious Person in whom all the families of the earth were to

be blessed is eminently so called. Now, all the promises are in Him, yea and amen.

Under the last head I observed that Satan was to bruise Christ's heel. Christ and all His spiritual children are the seed of the woman. And though they are all conquerors as considered in Him, yet, like Him also, their heel is to be bruised. By bruising the heel we are to understand all the sufferings to which the human nature of Christ was exposed on our account. Christ is here compared to a great Conqueror, who is suddenly and, as it were, unexpectedly bitten in the heel by a serpent. He starts for a moment and falls, but He rises immediately and receives no hurt by his fall. He proceeds on his journey, pursues His enemies, attacks and conquers them all. And what happened to Christ will be the case with all the seed. Their bodies will fall and crumble to dust, but they will rise at last, be united to their souls, and meet their Lord in the air. The old serpent bit us all and poisoned our immortal souls in Adam. But the second Adam, the seed of the woman, procured a medicine, the precious balm of His blood, by which the poison has been extracted and our souls restored to a stronger state of spiritual health than that enjoyed by our parents before the fall. But as we sinned, we forfeited our lives, and death has passed upon all. We must pay this debt. But death to the spiritual seed of the woman will be but a bruise in their heel. It will not hurt them in the least. They shall rise again to immortal life and beauty and vigour. And let it also be observed that every trouble and affliction they may meet with is but a bite in the heel. Every trouble to them is sanctified, and thus, though bit in the heel, the poison is extracted and the disease counteracted. Though often stung, they have a fountain at hand in the Gospel, and their very afflictions work for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and every slight wound they get in the heel will procure to their infernal enemy a deep and deadly wound in the heel. He will see with inexpressible anguish the wisdom of the serpent turned into foolishness, and all his schemes against Christ and His people turn with vengeance and confusion upon his own guilty head and the seed of the serpent. All the wicked upon earth will find that their enmity to God and to His people will terminate in their own everlasting condemnation and punishment. The Scripture says, "Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?" Let the wicked if they dare come forward with their ludicrous stories against the people of God at the great day. To the confusion of the wicked their pardon shall be proclaimed before men and angels, and now all tears are wiped from their faces. The

wicked hated their company, and preferred the service of sin and Satan to the service of God. They shall now see their own choice, and let them now laugh at religion if they dare.

INFERENCES.

From these words we see the awful nature of sin. It has debased and cursed the angelic nature, and sunk and degraded the human nature entirely. When Satan and Adam were in a state of innocence they both loved God and delighted in His service and worship. After their sin they got a grovelling taste, and sought their happiness in the dust. And if a Saviour had not interposed, mankind must have been miserable for ever. Adam could not pray till he heard the first Gospel. The source of our happiness is a Divine promise. This is the dawn of hope. People can have no well-grounded hope but what is founded upon the Gospel. All other false hope is from Satan. Wicked men pretend to have hope; but what hope had Adam? He fled from the presence of God. And so do sinners from every doctrine that exposes their corruptions and shakes their presumptions and false hopes. And though sinners flee from God to their vain excuses and refuge of lies, the voice of the law is, Oh Adam, O sinner, where art thou? God will bring you to His judgment seat.

3. There is a door of mercy opened. The seed of the woman did break the head of the serpent, and He can and will break His power in you if you apply to Him. The serpent has poisoned your nature and reduced you to the abject slavery of your lusts. Do you long for liberty? Does your soul pant for a cure? Behold, it is near you in every page of the Gospel. Christ is the seed of the woman, and if you become His spiritual seed by believing in His Name you will conquer Satan and all your rebellious lusts. And by making you holy He will thus qualify you for a more beautiful and sublime habitation than the garden of God in Eden. There is a door of hope; avail yourselves of the offer. The question, then, is which do you prefer, the service of the first or second Adam? If you prefer the dust and the world you will be placed with the serpent. But if you crucify the lusts and the flesh, you will be for ever happy.

Lastly—We see that there will be two kinds of seed—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And we should examine as to what kind we do belong. The seed of the serpent has two infallible marks. They have enmity to the people of God. They seek their happiness in the earth; they feed upon dust. The seed of the woman seek their happiness, their springs of joy and of comfort in God. It is their constant

business to be extracting the poison of the serpent from their souls. They hate sin, but do not indulge hatred to the sinner. They are entirely under the banner of the second Adam. They fight under his banner, and will be more than conquerors at last. They love their Master and His service, and this makes them persevere. It is their constant aim to strike the serpent in the head by breaking the power and the love of sin. And when they finish their work they will be translated to the Paradise above, where there will be no serpent to beguile or destroy.

May God bless His Word to our souls. AMEN.

LECTURE

On JEREMIAH ix. 9

Jeremiah ix. 9—"Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

You all know, my friends, the occasion of this meeting. This is a day of humiliation, fasting and prayer. We all profess to come here to deprecate the wrath of God and implore His mercy to our souls. And if we are in earnest we can tell you from the Word of God that there is very great cause. The Scriptures were writ for the instruction of the Church in all ages, and the sins which have brought judgments upon the Jews and upon guilty Jerusalem will bring similar vengeance upon all guilty nations to the end of the world. There is a natural connection between sin and misery, for the one will always produce the other. In speaking upon these words, I shall—

1. Point out to you some of the crying sins that draw down the vengeance of God upon nations, families, and individuals.
2. I shall prove to you by several arguments that God absolutely will punish, and must punish, such crying abominations.

Lastly—Make some practical improvement.

1. I am to point out to you some of the crying sins that bring down the vengeance of God upon nations, families, and individuals. It is the Word that points out to us the nature and the danger of sin. Among other portions of Scripture that speak of great sins we may consult the 5th, 7th, and 9th of Jeremiah, and 20th and 22nd of Ezekiel. In the black list the prophets mention the following :—(1) Uncleanness, (2) False swearing, (3) Sabbath breaking, (4) Covetousness. In pointing out the branches of these shocking sins I shall show you their awful danger and horrible nature.

(1) The prophets mention the awful sin of uncleanness in several of its branches. The nature of this sin, whether fornication or adultery, may point out its horrid danger and its great hurt both in a spiritual and temporal view. In a spiritual view it brings death and damnation to the soul, for

the house of the strumpet is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. "A whore is a deep ditch; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein." The man that committeth lewdness destroyeth his own soul and prepareth himself for the lake of fire and brimstone. This sin hardens the heart, blinds the mind, and stupifies the conscience. And what makes it particularly awful is that few of those who go on in a course of uncleanness ever returned to God. When the practice of sin becomes a second nature it is not only grace but a miracle of grace that converts them. It perfectly makes a fool of the sinner, for he laughs at the threatenings of God, and in return for this God will laugh at his distress in death and at the terrible judgment, because he did not take warning from the Word. And he likewise endangers the souls of others, for his bad example may ruin them for ever. He may likewise destroy the souls of those who knew his bad practices and conceal his crimes, for by doing so the Psalmist informs us that they participate in his wickedness. Let us pursue this thought a little further. His unlawful brood may be hid from the world, and a poor man, unknown to him, may come under the vows of baptism for the bastard of another, and what is still more awful, the adulterer may be the cause of the brother marrying his own sister. Can we then suppose that the God who sees all this will pass it without punishment? The sin of uncleanness makes the heart a sink of filthy thought and this nauseous quagmire will drown all serious impression and thoughts of eternity from his view; and as this sin is hurtful to the soul, it also hurts his temporal interest. This sin is an enemy to the health; he defiles his body as well as his soul. It often brings on disease and premature old age. As it hurts his character, it will effectually hurt his family. It is well known that men of virtue will naturally avoid such connections as they avoid the pestilence, for what can be expected from the nest of the raven but a bird like the parent. And even should the children be virtuous, how difficult to make the world believe that this can be the case. Scripture positively assures us that the seed of the wicked will not be removed. Adulterers often give their strumpets the very portions which they ought to give their children of lawful wedlock. And if a person points out the bastard brother or sister to the lawful child, this must greatly vex him, unless his soul is darkened with the crimes of his father. And to conclude this awful, shocking picture, this sin is often accompanied with murder! How often do mothers take poisonous draughts to hide their shame? But if you wish to get a complete sight of the picture come in to the dying chamber of the unclean person and look at him one-half hour before he goes to hell.

(2) Another of the awful sins mentioned is false swearing. A false oath is such a horrid profanation of God's holy name that Himself says He will not hold them guiltless. He is not like the false heathen gods of whom their stupid votaries bear witness that they laugh at the perjuries of lovers. God will punish sin, and though perjury is small in the sight of wicked men, it will appear great at the judgment seat. Many of you know how much the King's revenue is hurt by the false oath of the wicked. And we may complain how much the revenue of the King of Glory suffers by the perjury of wicked parents who solemnly swear to consecrate their children to God, and afterwards bring them up to the devil. But the oath they took is in God's book of remembrance, and shall be read before men and angels. And we are informed from Scripture that the curse of God will enter into the house of the thief and into the house of the false swearer, and destroy the house with the stores and timber thereof. Let thieves and sinful parents consider this in time.

(3) Another sin that brings the vengeance of God is Sabbath-breaking. The prophet Ezekiel informs us that the profanation of the Sabbath was one of the sins for which God poured out His judgments and His fury upon the Israelites in the wilderness, and yet they had not the spiritual advantage which we enjoy. God is a jealous God, and He takes note of the breach of the Sabbath. Some people despise the Sabbath so much that they never come to the house of God. It is their day for visiting, for riding, and for idle discourse. God gives them up to awful insensibility and infidel principles as a punishment for their breach of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a sign or love token between God and His people. Now when a woman despises the jewels and love tokens which her husband gave her and bestows them upon another man, she is surely an adulteress. Men of loose principles are afraid of virtuous women, but no libertine is afraid of women that breaks the Sabbath, nor has he cause. It was that same God that said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" that said also, "Remember the Sabbath." God will hold both guilty.

(4) Covetousness is the great sin that brings down the wrath and curse of God upon guilty nations. It is the fruitful source of many other sins. A certain commentator observes that in one chapter there are twenty-four sins mentioned, but that to covetousness alone might be ascribed the destruction of the City of Jerusalem. It is often the cause of Sabbath-breaking, of oppression, extortion, fraud, perjury, theft, borrowing money without intention to pay it, and every other unlawful means that people take to become rich. They have no idea how far this sin will carry them. Any kind of animal

does not thrive that eats its own species. We reckon them very unnatural that eat men. A certain gentleman fed a sow with swines' flesh and a dog with dog's flesh, but the poor animals paid dearly for the experiment. There is surely no man here that would eat man's flesh. But hear what the Scripture says :—"They eat up my people as they eat bread." When a man eats up the substance, the field or the money of another and lives at his neighbour's expense he surely eats his flesh. And the man that does so acts as unnatural a part as the dog that eats the dogs' flesh and the sow that eats the swines' flesh. The man that brings the curse of God to his house by getting rich in a hurry takes the most effectual method to hurt the temporal interests of his children. He may feed his children with what ought to support and feed the flesh of his poor neighbours. But, it may be asked, what is this man in the sight of God, for he surely devours his brother's flesh? And we can tell him with certainty that the tears and groans and prayers and complaints of the people whom he oppressed, defrauded, or injured will meet him somewhere. And without restitution he cannot expect admission into the Kingdom of Heaven. And if there are any in this congregation that has been guilty of these awful sins, let him repent, turn to God, and give his own to all that he has injured. He may swallow riches, but his children shall throw them up, and are in danger of begging their bread.

2. I shall prove to you by several arguments that God absolutely will punish, and must punish, such crying abominations. That God will punish and must punish sinners is clear from the following reasons :—

(1) Such sinners rebel against His authority, and though His long suffering and great patience may suffer them for a while, and His providence seems to wink at their crimes, He will show them at last that He was not an indifferent spectator of their conduct. By continuing in sin they defy His power, and God is bound in honour to take vengeance. The long delay will prove that He had no pleasure in the death of sinners, and the punishment will prove that He is the determined enemy of sin.

(2) Sinners, and especially unclean sinners, are enemies to His holiness, and are so foul that they must be excluded from His presence and kingdom. Lepers were formerly excluded from the society of the people of God. They were loathsome to others, and the disease was very afflictive and painful to the lepers themselves. Much more loathsome to God is the unclean sinner. He cannot be admitted into the Kingdom of God, nor can God have communion with him

while he continues in sin. And himself must be miserable. The gratification of his passions fixes stings in his conscience. He has an awful foreboding of what is to come. He stifles convictions because he thinks they torment him before the time, and as his unbelieving heart and guilty conscience tell him that God will not have mercy upon him, he takes his fill of pleasure, and this will make him a vessel of wrath to receive his fill of punishment. He is a slave to his strumpet, he is a slave to her friends, and he is afraid of any man to whom he suspects his conduct is known. He is a slave to his very slave. And if his slave should tell him, "Do this, else I will tell all that I know," he obeys through fear. And does not the purity of God lay him under the necessity of punishing such a man? It does. Scripture says (Psalm 25th) that God hath no pleasure in wickedness, that evil shall not dwell with Him, that the foolish shall not stand in His sight, and that He hateth all the workers of iniquity. In the nature of things the unclean sinner is a burden to himself; he is a burden on the earth, it groaneth under him, and no place is fit for him but that hell to which he is fast approaching.

(3) Divine justice must punish sinners. God is a just God, and He is an enemy to every act of injustice. The worldly man cannot gratify all the desires of his covetous heart without committing several gross acts of villainy; and himself must be conscious though the world is a stranger to what he has done, that God saw him. He may gather a heap, but let us see what price he paid. Will he not say that the poor strumpet that has got money to buy fine clothes has but poor pennyworth when she ruined her soul? And very poor is the pennyworth of the worldling. He sold his conscience and he sold his religion. He knows what he has done. Conscience, however her mouth may be shut, will tell him this. Whatever pleasures he may have in his pelf or plans, he knows very well that he has lost the pleasures of religion by them. After he has made this fine bargain he may prosper or triumph for a moment, but Scripture says (Job xx.) that he shall perish for ever like his own dung, and that the justice of God is determined to punish himself and his family. Justice armed with power will prove an awful adversary to the unjust and unprincipled sinner.

(4) The truth of God must punish false sinners. God hath sworn that sinners continuing in sin will not see the Kingdom. Sinners will find to their cost that God is not such as themselves. They think nothing of a false oath; but God cannot break His oath or deny Himself. It is said that there are people in London who will swear anything you desire them. We need not go to London for such wretches; they are

much nearer us. Let any person pass through a large village upon the Lord's Day, and there he will see the most awful proof of perjury. Did not such parents swear by God that they would train up their children in His fear, and can they without blasphemy think that God will break His own word and oath though they broke theirs? False swearers will go to perdition if God is a God of truth. And He is determined to keep His word. Now, if God is determined to punish—if all the Divine attributes are engaged to punish guilty nations and guilty individuals—have we not all cause to be humbled in the dust and turn to God from all our sins that iniquity may not be our ruin? When the lion roars all the beasts in the forest tremble, and if the threatenings of God do not affect people, their ruin is near and their destruction without remedy.

Lastly, sin, in the nature of things, must bring misery on nations and individuals. The very light of nature could teach this much to blind heathens. They believed a future state of rewards and punishments. Now, if people believe an existence after death it naturally follows that unbridled and impetuous passions will make a hell in every sinner's breast. He cannot gratify his lusts in the other world. There is not as much as a drop of cold water to quench his thirst. And when companions in sin meet, as they cannot gratify their passions, their souls are filled with the rage of devils. If all the mad people and fools in Great Britain were gathered to one very large house and let loose upon one another, what an awful company would they make! Much more awful, however, is the place of torment. The fence of human laws and the fear of the gallows will keep the wicked in some kind of order in this life. But in the world of black spirits all restraint is taken off, and they are abandoned to their own thoughts and to their fury and tumultuous passions. Like the heathen fanatics, they are seeking happiness in a rage of despair because they cannot find it. They refused the food and medicine of their souls. Instead of this they took poison. The poison has now begun to operate, which will torment them for ever. You all profess, when you appear to swear before a judge, that you are to answer to God at His judgment seat. And if you come before Him in your sins, how awful will your meeting be. It is your present work to commit sin and to forget sin. It will be your work then to remember sin and to suffer the weight of its punishment. Sin at this time sits lightly upon your conscience; it will then be heavier than mountains of lead. A trifle will keep you now from the means of grace, but an eternity hereafter will not give you one opportunity. You may now laugh at the people of God,

but you will then be glad to get a single drop of the oil in their lamps. You see nothing now but their faults and failings, and you will see nothing then but your own misery. A sight of the strumpet will then terrify the unclean person, and the thought of his pelf will be intolerable to the covetous. What would Sabbath-breakers and unnatural parents give for one Sabbath, one sermon, one prayer, or one Psalm? Alas! the joyful sound is heard no more. God will then show sinful nations and sinful individuals how fearful a thing it is to fall under the weight of Divine vengeance. Sinner, is this sermon lost upon you with all the rest?

3. Lastly—I shall now lay two practical observations before you in the way of improvement.

- (1) Though the sins of Great Britain are great and highly aggravated, if we turn, like Niniveh, our tranquility may be lengthened and the prayers of the people of God may avert the judgments.
- (2) Whether temporal judgments will seize the wicked or not, Divine vengeance will overtake them sooner or later.

(1) Though the sins of Great Britain are great and highly aggravated, if we turn, like Niniveh, our tranquility may be lengthened and the prayers of the people of God may avert the judgments which we deserve as a nation. Great sins require great humiliation. Even wicked Ahab averted the judgments in his own day by a half repentance. And we may judge from this what would have happened if he had been truly penitent. Bloody Nebuchadnezzar, that great sinner, is advised to break off his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. If a nation were humbled for their sins we can predict the event, for God is gracious. But if they do not we cannot tell how long the prayers of the people of God can prevent their fall, for Ezekiel and Jeremiah could not prevent the captivity.

(2) Whether temporal judgments will seize the wicked or not, Divine vengeance will overtake them sooner or later. One wicked man may die on his bed, and, like the rich man in the Gospel, may open his eyes in hell; another bad man may perish by war or pestilence. But whatever be their fate in a temporal view, we are sure that punishment waits them hereafter. The prayers of God's people may put by the judgments of which we were once afraid, but God has many ways of punishing though the sword should not come near our doors. God gave the antideluvians 120 years to repent, and did thus strive with them by His Spirit. But were not the wicked who perished during that period as surely miserable in the world to come

as those who were swept off the face of the earth by the flood ? If God delays the temporal judgments of the families of bad men they are not the less sure for all that. The judgment came upon Saul's family in his son's day, and the family of Jehu were delayed to the fourth generation. Let us not, then, deceive ourselves, but let us turn to God by true repentance. And if we do so, whatever He may do with us in a temporal view, if the soul is saved we are happy. If we forsake our sins God will abundantly pardon; but though He pardoned David, He punished him in this life.

May God bless His Word for Christ's sake. AMEN.

LECTURE

On I. PETER iii. 16 to End

THIS is a continuation of the advice he had given in the previous part of the chapter, and greatly calculated for the instruction and comfort of Christians in their suffering state. I shall speak a little to the words, and conclude with some practical remarks.

Verse 16—"Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

One would naturally think at first sight that virtue would command love and admiration. Some of the heathens were of this opinion. But however natural the thought, it does not always prove true in fact. The wicked may talk respectfully enough of virtuous characters while they do not interfere with their temporal interest or with the prosecution of their lusts. The appearance of a tiger might deceive a stranger. Though one of the fiercest of wild beasts, he might think him as tame as a lamb. In like manner, the fiercest and most savage of mankind pay a deference to virtue and religion. Showing faith in good men, Herod respected the Baptist. But when the Baptist interfered with his darling sin he brought him to the block. Our Lord Jesus Christ astonished mankind by the sanctity of His life and the glory of His miracles; even unbelievers spoke well of him. But when He began by His doctrine to detect the hypocrisy and covetousness of the Pharisees, they appeared in their proper colours. They first attack Him by false and malicious calumnies, and at last brought Him to the Cross. In like manner the Pagan used his followers, as we learn in the instance of Paul and Demetrius, the silversmith. The primitive Christians opposed the Pagan religion, and this brought upon them the fury of those blind idolators, and especially of their leaders. One of the weapons they used against them was calumny. Now to repel this effectually Scripture advises us to have a good conscience, and this will remove the sting of their reproach, and it will sometimes turn it upon themselves. The enemies of the godly have often been put to shame when the arts they have used have been discovered and their scenes of villainy

brought to light. A good man may be innocently accused and strangers may believe the calumny, but a good conscience in the meantime will support him, and the authors of the falsehood will have shame for their portion. Their lives will sooner or later betray them, and the Christian whom they attacked will come off in triumph.

Verse 17—"For it is better if the will of God be so that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing."

It may often happen that Christians are called forth to suffer. In many cases they cannot avoid this. By doing their duty they may draw upon themselves, not only calumny but also loss and temporal inconvenience. The Apostle, however, observes that suffering, with all its inconvenience, is better than sin, and he gives them comfort by contrasting their condition with those who suffer for their faults. In such cases the advantage of the suffering Christian is great. The Christian and the criminal might perhaps be lodged in the same prison. They may both have the prospect of death before them. We can easily see which is the most enviable state. The one is great even in distress, and the other is despicable, even though the world should smile upon him. But, oh, how pitiable is his case should he meet with a reverse of fortune. This, then, is cause of comfort to the suffering Christian. And should not this be sufficient, there is an argument in the next verse to silence him.

Verse 18—"For Christ also hath once suffered for sin; the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

Does the Christian suffer, and does he suffer unjustly, perhaps to the spoiling of his goods? The Psalmist complains (Ps. lxxix. 4) that he restored that which he took not away. In some cases the Christian is used as was Christ Himself. He was perfectly innocent; He was made to restore what He took not away. He suffered for others, for sins not His own. Does the Christian suffer from others, and is he used unjustly, and does not he sometimes feel fretful thoughts arise within him? Let him lift up his eyes to the Cross, and this will repress all angry thoughts. Did Christ suffer, and innocent, and shall we escape suffering altogether when we must be conscious that our sufferings are less than our sins? But though the sufferings of Christ are an example to us, and should work patience within us, the Apostle raises our thoughts to a higher view of His sufferings. He suffered not merely to give us a good example. This is too low a view of them. He suffered for sins. He offered a proper sacrifice—His soul and body. And as it was the holy human nature of the Son of God that

was offered, this gave it infinite dignity. The design of the offering was to bring us to God. We were alienated from God by our fall in Adam and our personal crimes. But this offering satisfied Divine justice, and procured for us the Holy Spirit to sanctify our sinful and polluted natures, and thus bring us back to God. But though He suffered in weakness He was raised with power. He was put to death in the flesh, but raised from the dead by the Spirit. And this is the great, the infallible proof of the Christian religion, the resurrection of our Saviour. That He rose from the dead is an undoubted fact. And this event justified His doctrine, His character and His miracles. Nothing can raise the dead but the power of God. Now, He was dead, and would God exert His power to raise a dead man that made such extraordinary pretensions if He was not what He said? He called Himself the Son of God, and received even life as such. Accordingly, by His resurrection He was declared to be the Son of God with power.

Verses 19-20—"By which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water."

We are here informed that Christ existed in the days of Noah, when He preached to sinners by His Spirit. At the time the Apostle wrote they were in prison. But they got warning before they came there. The Spirit of God did strive with their consciences by the preaching of Noah. They got space to repent, for the long suffering of God waited for 120 years. This was the time the ark was preparing. But it seems the preaching of Noah was lost upon them, for of the great multitude which then existed upon the face of the earth, only eight souls were saved by water. And the Apostle here clearly insinuates that this will still be the fate of believers and unbelievers. Those who died in their sins, notwithstanding the preaching of Noah and the striving of the Spirit with their consciences, were then in prison. And we see this will be the fate of sinners under every dispensation. And it is certain we are more inexcusable than the sinners in Noah's time. We have more light, and therefore if sinners continue incorrigible their punishment will be proportionably greater. Let us see, then, what were the sins in which the Antidiluvians indulged when they lent a deaf ear to all the pious exhortations of these great men, Enoch and Noah. And these sins were fleshly lusts, violence and oppression. From these two causes proceeded all their sins, and made them to corrupt their ways. They were given to fleshly lusts. They lived in the unrestrained indulgence of their appetites. The evil

began by the marriage of good men with the daughters of sinners, which made God to punish them by giving them a monstrous brood. They had giants born to them, who, as they were monsters in person, were also monsters in wickedness. There is another sin for which they are branded—violence and oppression. They took by iniquity what belonged to their fellow-creatures. They added house to house, it is likely, and field to field, for the earth, we are told, was filled with violence. We do not indeed read that there was war before the flood. But we see clearly that they invaded one another's right, and the spoil of the poor and the curse of their fellow-creatures were in their houses. They proceeded from bad to worse notwithstanding the pains taken upon them, till at last God was provoked to sweep them from the face of the earth by the waters of a flood.

Verse 21—"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ)."

The Apostle is here making a comparison between the temporal salvation in the days of Noah by means of the ark, and our everlasting salvation begun by baptism. Baptism is a type of our regeneration. The covenant of baptism received and kept will undoubtedly save. But he explains to us how it will do so. It is not the putting away the filth of the flesh. The outward ceremony of baptism will not save any man without the thing signified. There must be also the answer of a good conscience towards God. The greatest number of baptised persons in primitive times were come to years to take the vows upon themselves. Now, it was not the ceremony of baptism that saved them, but the answer of the good conscience, if it bore witness that they did forsake sin and did renounce the world, the flesh and the devil. Now what enabled them to give this answer was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, it may be asked, how can infants give this answer? To this it is replied that they are capable of regeneration as sure as the children of believers under the Old Testament dispensation. People that profess to believe the Gospel have the privilege themselves, and get it in their right to their children for whom they vow. And if the children stand by the covenant they were partakers of in baptism, and believe in Christ, they will be saved. And should people take the vows after coming to years and be baptised, then if they do not believe or lead a holy life their baptism will not avail. The waters of the flood drowned the wicked world in the days of Noah. None were saved but such as were in the ark. And none will be saved but such as believe

in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rise from the grave of sin by virtue of His resurrection.

Verse 22—"Who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

This is one of the great articles of our faith. We are to believe in the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. He ascended into heaven, and all the heavenly hosts obey Him and are in subjection to His authority. Every tongue, every knee, must confess and bow to the name of Jesus of Nazareth our Incarnate God. And as He is now in heaven, He will hereafter appear as the Judge of the quick and the dead. He will appear to the joy of His friends and to the terror and confusion of His enemies. Let His people then wait with patience, and bear every trouble and trial intended to purify their souls. Our Lord wore a crown of thorns before He was exalted to the crown of glory. Let us suffer with Him that we may reign with Him in glory.

INFERENCES.

1. As all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution and calumny, let us disarm the wicked by our holy life and conversation.

To suppose that the wicked will cease from speaking ill is to suppose that the serpent will cease from his venom. Let us take care that we give them no just cause. If we gain their ill-will and ill-language by doing our duty or opposing their wickedness, we cannot help this. Let us yield to that providence that now permits and hereafter will punish their wickedness. And our Lord's sufferings should animate us to follow His precious example. The Captain of our salvation is before us.

2. We see the end of those who disobey the Gospel. The wicked Antediluvians are swept off with a flood, the wicked under the Gospel with fire.

3. We here see a contrast; eight are saved, the world of ungodly are drowned. Where will you have your portion, with the few or with the many?

4. The ark is the means of salvation. There is no name given but the name of Christ by which we can be saved. You have the offer; great is your danger if you refuse.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On I. PETER iv. 1-9

THE Apostle here shows the Christians their duty from the sufferings of Christ, and then proceeds to lay before them several duties to which they were called in their present suffering state. I shall explain the words and conclude with practical inferences.

Verse 1—"For as much then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, for He that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

The sufferings of Christ engage us as Christians to cease from sin. We are to arm ourselves with the same mind. Reformation and conversion begin in the mind and we can never subdue sin unless we have something of the mind that was in Christ. The sufferings of Christ are the strongest argument against all sin. If we feel true sympathy for the suffering of a precious Saviour, we will not indulge or nurse the enemies that put him to a cruel death. Christ suffered in his human nature, and we ought to make our corrupt flesh suffer by refusing to obey its corruptions and passions. We should make the old man to suffer by ceasing from sin. The nature of mortification is to cease from sin and to oppose the very first motions of it in mind and thought.

2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. When a man turns from sin his great view and aim is to serve and please God. The rule of the multitude is not the glory of God, the divine will, or the oracles of truth. These things are far from their thoughts. They look to the example of others around them and follow that. Instead of doing or seeking the will of God, they follow the lusts of man. Every man follows his own favourite lust or passion, and he can point out a number of living examples that keep him in countenance. Not so the Christian. He thinks it more than enough what he has already spent of his time in gratifying the desires of sin. He will give the time to come to the service of his Maker. He will redeem the time, and as he cannot recall what is past, he will be very careful of what is in future. Conscious that he has abused his time and talents, he will

hereafter consecrate both to the service and glory of his God. He will avoid the lusts of the flesh and men who gratify the flesh.

Verse 3—"For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries."

The Apostle here shows that the time before their conversion was enough for the purpose of sin. And he mentions the different sins in which they lived when they did the will of the Gentiles. And the same argument will still hold to this day. We all profess the holy Christian religion. Whatever we might have done before we made a profession becomes now doubly sinful from the nature of our profession as Christians. If people live in these or in any other sins it greatly aggravates their crimes. Sin is poison to the soul in any that commits it, but if he professed and promised to forsake it and after all lives in any known sin, it is greater than that of others.

Verse 4—"Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."

As it is this day, it was in the days of the Apostles, with this difference, that it was only enemies and unbelievers that spoke evil of Christians in the days of the Apostles, but now the persons that speak evil of Christians are people that profess the same faith and religion with themselves. In heathens and enemies it was in some sense excusable, at least in such of them as were strangers to the holy doctrines they embraced. They spoke evil of them, and thought their conduct very strange and curious; and wicked people do so still. The good conduct of godly people condemns the wicked. The chastity of the Christian condemns the unclean, the sobriety of the Christian condemns the glutton and drunkard, and the honesty of the Christian condemns the covetousness of the grovelling, worldly-minded soul, whose nose, like the mole, is always in the earth. And as their consciences are galled by seeing the behaviour of the righteous, their venom rises against them, and they speak ill of them. These wretches are like the people who rake the streets in great towns. They make it their business to gather all the sinless and sinful failings of the people of God. They magnify their faults and extenuate their virtues, and why? Merely because they are not like unto themselves. They freely pardon and pass over greater faults in any one of their own number. But their danger is great, for we are informed in the next verse—

Verse 5—"Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Wicked people consider the hard speeches they make against the righteous as only common conversation, but these awful words show us that they must give a terrible reckoning of them in the day when all mankind shall be judged. We learn from the Book of Jude that God is to come with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. Sinners may think the crime of speaking ill of the people of God a venial fault, but Scripture holds forth a different language. These speeches are ungodly and expose ungodly sinners to exemplary punishment. When Christ called to Paul, he said, "Why persecutest thou me?" Paul thought that he was persecuting a number of senseless fanatics who deserved not to live upon the face of the earth. But our Lord takes it as done to Himself. Little do the wicked think what they are doing when they persecute, backbite, and ill-use poor Christians. Christians, with all their weaknesses, are the children of God and their Father who is in heaven will resent the evil treatment they meet with from the wicked. There is a remarkable passage in the history of Gideon. After conquering the Midianites and taking two of their princes prisoners, he asked them what manner of men were they whom they slew at Tabor. Their answer was that they resembled himself. And Gideon said—"They were my brethren, the sons of my mother. As the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive I would not slay you." And as a want of the duties of charity to the people of God is an article of condemnation to the wicked, how will it enhance their punishment if they have used them ill beside. The fear of this should make people very cautious how they meddle with such. God will punish the sins of His own, but there is a danger that the rod employed will be thrown at last in the fire. It was a judicious prayer that a prudent, worldly man once used, that he might be kept from being a scourge of the people of God. And he was right, for it is dangerous to meddle with them. Such as do so must give account before the righteous Judge of the living and the dead.

Verse 6—"For for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit."

In the chapter before this the Apostle informs us that the Gospel was preached to the Antediluvian world. And of the design of preaching the Gospel the Apostle informs us here. In order to preach the Gospel it is necessary to preach the law. Indeed, the Gospel takes for granted that we are sinners, and

therefore proposes glad tidings of great joy to guilty criminals. Before the Gospel absolves the doctrine of the law condemns and judges the sinner. Now, when sinners are thus judged in their own consciences before God they have recourse to the Gospel to justify them. The design of preaching the Gospel to the Antediluvians was to bring them to God. Their sins were opened up to them by Noah, and their danger pointed out, and this condemned them. But the design of preaching was not to leave them in that state, but to bring them to live according to God in the Spirit. They might receive comfort by believing in the seed of the woman, the glorious Personage who was coming to save the world. That ancient believers saw Him in the sacrifices and offerings is clear where He is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. A view of the incarnate Saviour made them forsake sin and live to God in righteousness and holiness. And if the Word preached had this effect upon Old Testament hearers how inexcusable are sinners under the New Testament if they do not believe. The Gospel was preached to them who are dead, whatever use they made of it. It is preached to us also, and if it does not bring us to God we cannot blame the Gospel. We cannot escape if we neglect this great salvation, and we should therefore examine what effect the doctrine had upon us.

Verse 7—"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

He informs the Jews to whom he wrote that the end of their state and polity was drawing near, that their temple and ceremonies would be soon at an end. And the Spirit that foresaw this informed them also of the end of the world. That event in the reckoning of careless, short-sighted mankind may be still at a great distance. But it is near in the view of Him to whom a thousand years are as one day. At whatever distance the day of the general judgment may be, it is certain that the end of every individual upon the face of the earth cannot be very far off. To many it is near and to some at their very doors. Instead, then, of seeking sublunary bliss and depending upon many years to come, the holy man recommends it to Christians to practice sobriety, watchfulness and prayer. He knew that this was the doctrine of his Lord before him. Christ inculcated sobriety on His followers and an exemption from the cares of this life lest the day of death should overtake them unawares. Sobriety keeps the body wholesome and the mind pure, and watching and prayer will keep us always upon our guard. If we sink into the cares and pleasures of this life we should soon forget the concerns of eternity. The exercise of these graces will prevent many

sins and gradually wear off the fears of death. To such it appears with an angel's face. They die, as the Jews say, "Moses died with a kiss." Mark the upright; their latter end is peace. But the worldly and sensual soul is taken in an unprepared state. If such have any feeling of their state they die in terror, or if they are entirely left by God they die in stupidity, like the beasts that perish. The more they were immersed in the world or in the flesh the more awful their condition, the more difficult their recovery. Daily thoughts of eternity are like medicine to the soul, they purify the thoughts and keep the mind wholesome, as saltness and motion keep the ocean from putrefaction. But sinners, forgetting future reckoning, are given up to carking cares and empty pleasures.

Verse 8—"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

Charity, or the love of God, showing itself in the love of the brethren, is the greatest of Christian graces. And it is here peculiarly recommended, because it is like the love of Christ. His love covered the sins of all His people. It hid them from the justice of God and threw them into the sea of His oblivion. When they were wallowing in their sins He passed by them, pitied their case, cast His skirt over them, and said unto them, "Live," and they did live. True Christian charity will imitate the heavenly example. It will recover people from their sins, and by prayer, good example, and advice bring them back to the favour and friendship of God. Instead of spreading the faults and failings of the people of God it will cast a veil over them. And even should the sin be glaring and scandalous, they will do as the sons of Noah did. Instead of laughing like wicked Canaan, they will lament the fall and cover the sinner with their garment. When he sleeps they will watch over him, and when he awakens from the lethargy of sin they will tell him what he has done, and endeavour as much as in them lies to prevent a relapse. And though nothing can effectually cover sins by the garment of Christ's righteousness, the love of the brethren will hide the sins of the brethren. If sin can be concealed without prejudice to the sinner's soul the Christian will do so. If our Lord exposed the sins of some of His people by recording them in His book it was as a wholesome beacon to others that they might avoid sin. But how many thousand sins did He hide, though He revealed the sins of a few individuals? If a man's child or his friend whom he loves as his own soul falls into sin he will conceal it if consistently with duty, and so will the Christian. But if the good of a person's soul and the good

of society require it the Christian will, though reluctantly, bring his brother to punishment. And if a man is full of love and good works, few will, perhaps, be malignant enough to expose his faults and failings. Love will hide them.

Verse 9—"Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

The Apostle here explains to us the duty of hospitality. It was a duty to be practised to the people of God. Many of them in particular were deprived of their substance in time of persecution, and as there were no inns in the country they were peculiar objects of sympathy. Their Christian brethren were therefore to relieve and comfort them, and they were to do this without grudging, because in fact they gave it to the Lord. And we may here see the nature of this amiable virtue. The people of the world give many names to virtue and to vice. They call good evil and evil good. Hospitality should have an eye to the glory of God and the good of His people. Some people call that hospitality when they keep an open table to those who can pay them again. And they do not grudge to spend in one entertainment and in one night what would do good for several days to a number of poor families. This is not Christian hospitality; it is rather unchristian luxury. If called upon to relieve any of the members of Christ they may reach their hand, but they do not open their hearts. They give, but they do it grudgingly. Several people give feasts, but they grudge the expense next day. But, it may be asked, to whom have they given them? Not surely to God or to His people. They give for the pleasure of being reckoned hospitable. Such have their reward. But surely they cannot expect to be rewarded in another life for gratifying their own vanity and feeding the luxury of pampered, rich people who can pay them again. The apostle speaks here of hospitality to the poor saints of God. Such as give to these from a principle of Christian charity will be rewarded in the resurrection of the just, and therefore they ought to give cheerfully. The people of God ought to love one another, and such of them as are rich ought not by any means to grudge helping their poor brethren, for such do only lend unto the Lord.

INFERENCES.

1. If we would make war upon sin we must do so by the grace and spirit of Christ. If we try any other weapon we shall be sure to miscarry. The cause why so many return again in folly to the world, to apostacy, is that they have tried to work in their own strength. Why have we so many

bankrupts in religion? Because they do not draw upon the bank of heaven. They are like persons that set up in the world by borrowed money; when every man takes up his own they are found empty.

2. The design of the Gospel is to make us live to God. We may ask ourselves, Has it this effect upon us? Do we effectually believe it? If so, we shall live like Jesus Christ.

Lastly—Our time here is but short. We should spend it in the duties of charity and hospitality. Love to the souls of men will make us pluck them like brands out of the fire, and love to their bodies will make us open our hearts and our hands to our poor suffering brethren. This is true Christian hospitality. This is what is recommended in the Word of God and will comfort at death. The practice of these benevolent graces will prove that we had the true faith that unites to Christ and leaves His image on the souls of men.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On I. PETER iv. 10 to End

IN the precious words we heard the Apostle continues his advices and directions to his Christian converts. I shall, therefore, speak a little to them, and conclude with some practical inferences.

Verses 10, 11—"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

If God has bestowed any gift or talent, temporal or spiritual, upon any individual he is to improve it to the glory of God and the good of his brethren. Some are blest with learning and abilities to teach and instruct others in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. They have received these talents, not with a view to hide them in a napkin in the earth, but to improve themselves and others by them. And if private Christians have inferior talents they have them for the edification of the body of Christ. In primitive times others spoke in Christian assemblies, as well as the stated pastors of the Church, and in the meetings of the people of God. Christians, on days appointed for such meetings, may tell what He hath done for their souls, and in their own sphere may instruct, edify, and delight their brethren. The most learned and the most pious of the clergy have often confessed that their souls were refreshed and entertained by the experiences and conversations of private Christians on these occasions. We may say to the sanctified soul, let his learning be never so great or his talents so conspicuous, Come and see. If profane sinners speak indifferently of what they know not, we know that Scripture compares them to dogs and swine, and such animals have no relish for the pearls of the Gospel. It is likewise incumbent upon the teachers of youth of all kinds such as schoolmasters and catechists and others, to impart spiritual gifts to the souls under their charge, because every

man must answer for the talents he got. Every Christian will speak with reverence of the oracles of God and show them that deference and respect they deserve. And as they are to improve their spiritual talents, they are likewise to do good with the temporal blessings they enjoy. People are but stewards of the good things of this life; they cannot call them their own; their tenure is uncertain, and they may take wing when they least expect such an event. They are therefore to do good according to their ability. If they do so their riches are a blessing to themselves and others. Their study in such case will be that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Riches are like dunghills; if they are left after gathering them in useless heaps, they do no good, but if spread upon the ground they produce a rich crop. If people all their days are employed in gathering riches, instead of being of service they are a hurt to their souls. But if they glorify God by them and do good to men they show they are the children of God, and will be rewarded by Jesus Christ. They give their riches to Him. They are deposited in the royal bank of heaven, and they will receive interest for them through all eternity. Every man is to do good according to his ability; and few indeed are so poor but they may do good to others. God looks to the heart, and the widow's two mites will be rewarded as sure as the hospitality of Abraham, for He loves a cheerful giver.

Verses 12, 13—"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The Apostle here informs them of some of the several doctrines of Christianity. Perhaps these good men laboured under the same mistake with himself when he first began to follow Christ. He was dreaming of golden days and great temporal prosperity under Messiah, the Prince. Our Lord gradually undeceived him, and prepared him for the doctrine of the Cross. And the Apostle gives the same doctrine to his Christian converts. It might be their lot not only to be persecuted, but even to seal the doctrine with their blood; and this was a fiery trial indeed. They were to prepare for it, however, as it might perhaps be for the glory of God and their own comfort and good. The design of this great trial was their spiritual good, and they were not to think it strange, for it might be necessary. It might wean themselves and others from the world, and set their affections on things above. The fiery trial might bring them in a fiery chariot to heaven. They were therefore not to shrink from it, but

rather cheerfully to prepare themselves for the stroke. They were even to rejoice as being partakers of the sufferings of Christ, for the martyrs were to have a double share of His glory. To rejoice in the prospect of suffering is a great attainment in the school of Christ. But such a joyful and happy state of mind is attainable by His grace.

Verse 14—"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."

They were to lay their account with the fiery trial and prepare for it. But it might not come, though this should be the case. There was a trial which they could not escape as Christians. It is the lot of all the royal family of heaven while sojourning on this earth. Christ Himself did not escape it, though the only Man who was perfectly free from sin. He got His share of the scourge of the tongue. He was accused of words and deeds to which His holy soul was a stranger. And His followers must drink of His cup. The Apostle advances a strange doctrine, which might appear a paradox to the men of the world. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ happy are ye. Strange, however, as it may sound in the ears of worldly people, it is a great and precious truth. And He gives a reason for what He advances. Reproached Christians were happy because the comforts of the Holy Spirit rested on their souls. And whereas wicked men reproached that good Spirit and His work upon the souls of good men, they glorified Him as the Author of all grace. They reckoned His grace so precious that they thought it worth their while to suffer reproach and persecution for His sake.

Verse 15—"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body, in other men's matters."

It may seem at first view an unnatural idea and an unnecessary caution that a Christian would suffer as a murderer or a thief. But the Apostle knew human nature too well, and how necessary watching and prayer were for all his Christian converts. If himself fell, so might they, and therefore there was need of caution. Their Pagan acquaintances laid all these crimes to their charge. We often hear Christians complain that their neighbours laid such-and-such things to their charge of which they were innocent. But however innocent of these crimes, a wise and a good providence permits these charges to be made against them to cure them of the evil propensity they had to these crimes. This persecution of the tongue and the things with which they are falsely

charged bring them to a throne of grace and makes them pray earnestly to be kept from these very sins. Instead, then, of clearing their innocence and thus feeding their pride, they ought to descend to their hearts and examine what they may find there. And when they do so, what a sink of abomination will they see within! When the Christian finds himself guilty in thought he has cause of humility. If a Christian, by the strength of temptation, has been hurried into some of these sins, let him repent and repair his fault. And if he be innocent, let him glorify the God who took care of him.

Verse 16—"For if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."

Suffering as a Christian instead of being cause of shame and reproach is cause of joy and thankfulness, and such Christians should glorify God. The first Christians were joyful that they were reckoned worthy to suffer shame for the sake of Christ. Our Lord Himself suffered shame, the accursed death of the Cross. And the more His followers suffer shame for His name the more is their cause of triumph. This post of honour is assigned for the bravest spirits, and requires great strength of mind. The greatest philosopher is not proof against reproach, contempt and scorn. It is said to the praise of Moses that he esteemed reproach for Christ a greater honour than the crown of Pharaoh. He preferred suffering with the people of God to the enjoyment of sinful pleasure for a season. If a man of great bravery is taken and ungenerously used by an enemy we never consider the indignity he suffers as a disgrace. The more he suffers the more he is rewarded by his King and country afterwards. Christ despised the shame, and we ought to despise the insults of people who have no higher pleasure than the moles of the earth.

Verse 17—"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?"

All temporal judgments generally begin at the Church. And we learn this from different parts of the Old Testament. The visible Church was confined to Palestine for several centuries. We learn from scripture that the Israelites were severely punished for their sins, as we learn from profane history that other nations were visited with the scourge of war. The prophet Jeremiah, in particular, who was first to prophecy against the Jews and other nations, informs us of the judgments that awaited them under the symbolical language of a cup. And Jerusalem is the first mentioned who was to drink of this bitter cup and afterwards the

neighbouring nations in their turn. Now, the Apostle here might have his eye to the prophecy of our Lord concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. The children of Israel were once the People of God and their temple the glory of the earth, as Palestine was of all lands. But judgment was to begin at the house of God, for the glorious temple at Jerusalem was laid in ruins. And how could the wicked escape? The Apostle asks if the judgments begin at us, what shall be the end of these who disobey the Gospel? Though the judgment may begin with the people of God, it will not end with them. The church is scourged and punished, but the stroke is soon over. The fatherly chastisement is calculated to cure them of their sins. Not so the wicked. They all along disobey the Gospel, and as they are past cure they must be destroyed. If the Gospel is not effectual to turn men from their sins, we can expect no other means. If people believe not Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his apostles, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. And we may learn from this portion of Scripture that awful temporal judgments are a presage and an earnest to the wicked of what they may expect hereafter. What shall be the end of those who disobey the Gospel? And we may naturally put the question to ourselves, "Has the judgment begun at the House of God?" We know that spiritual judgments are the forerunners of temporal, and without repentance of everlasting judgments. We see spiritual judgments begun. There is an uncommon stupidity and want of concern about the things of God with the majority. Many are immersed in the affairs of the world, like the old world before the flood. Mutual love and natural affection have taken their flight, and the darkness is long, so that the question may be asked at the watchmen of Israel—"Watchman, what of the night?" In the warm latitudes the inhabitants can prognosticate hurricanes and earthquakes from different appearances in the sea and in the air, and among ourselves many can foretell change of weather from several signs they observe. At such people we might ask the question our Saviour put—"Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but cannot ye discern the signs of the times?" We observe natural signs, and if we had spiritual eyes we might observe spiritual signs that prognosticate spiritual and temporal judgments. The appearance of the swallow and turtle are sure signs of warm weather, and when birds and beasts descend from the hills to the low grounds we dread a storm, and we see it comes. Spiritual signs are equally sure, and they certainly prognosticate a storm. What were the signs of approaching destruction to the temple of Jerusalem?

1. They neglected the day of their visitation.
2. They refused the Saviour and despised His Gospel.
3. They permitted thieves to be in His temple.
4. They preferred earthly to heavenly pleasures.

Awful prognostics these of their future dissolutions in Church and State. Let us examine how far we are like them.

1. They neglected the day of their visitation. The Son of God took a visit from heaven, and came to this earth in a human form. His design was to save men from their sins, and He effected this by His heavenly doctrines, by His astonishing miracles, and by the sacrifice He offered for the sins of His people. Instead of receiving such a heavenly Guest as He deserved, they treated Him with indifference and heard His doctrine with prejudice and scorn. He offered every proof they could reasonably desire that His doctrine was from God. But they were so much drenched in the cares and pleasures of this life that they could not afford time to hear, and when they did hear they heard with prejudice and hatred, when He touched any of their favourite crimes. Instead of improving such a precious opportunity, they let it pass and went to their different pursuits.

2. They refused the Saviour and despised His Gospel. Our Lord taught in His own house agreeably to the prophecies that were about Him. He preached heavenly and astonishing truths, and proved them by as astonishing miracles. His holy nature was without blemish and His life without the least stain of sin. Instead of receiving and honouring such a glorious Personage, they ridiculed His Person and aspersed His character. They wrested His words, misconstrued His doctrines and conduct, and vilified Him with the most bitter reproaches. As His nature was holy, His doctrine was holy also, and this brought upon Him the hatred of the selfish, the worldly, and the malicious. His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore He taught His followers humility and self-denial. Instead of seeking happiness in pleasure, ambition and riches, He taught them to seek their happiness in God alone. These doctrines were so diametrically opposite to the sentiments of their carnal minds that they opposed Him with all their might. And as they could not hurt Him by truth, they did all they could by calumnies to hurt His credit with the people. Their malice shows itself in their lies.

3. They permitted thieves to be in His temple. What kind of characters their teachers, rulers, and high priests were we learn from the Gospel. The abuses that were introduced

were such that our Lord inveighs very bitterly against them, and His zeal for the glory of God made Him scourge the buyers and sellers out of the temple. From this very circumstance we are led to conclude what small degree of veneration they had for sacred things when they could carry the world into the most sacred place then upon earth. It may show us what power the world has over those who are its deluded votaries. They may put on the outward garb of religion because it is the fashion of the country, but religion, conscience and everything else must truckle to interest. Gehazi and the people of Shechem found the art of making profit of the garb of a profession. These very teachers are called thieves because they had not the glory of God in view, but the advancement of their temporal interest. They were greedy dogs that loved the fleece better than the flock, and took the benefice though souls should starve.

4. They preferred earthly to heavenly pleasures, notwithstanding their pretensions to sanctity; they hated the doctrine of the Gospel. It commanded them to give their hearts to God; they gave their hearts to Mammon. It commanded them to have their treasures in heaven. They had their treasures on earth, they sought happiness in great riches and large possessions, and the very best of them turned their backs upon Christ. Witness the young man in the Gospel. What made him do so? We are told he had large possessions. Would you see the religion of a worldling? Read the history of the young man who turned back to perdition with his eyes open. How awfully strong is the sin of covetousness when a man pretending respect could find it in his heart to forsake Christ after having a personal interview with Him. The Jewish nation saw Christ personally. They heard His doctrine, they witnessed His life and His miracles. But, alas, they loved the world and could not love Christ, for one had a farm, another a wife, a third merchandise, and a fourth a yoke of oxen; and these were the poor objects for which they lost their souls. These, then, were the great sins of the Jews and the forerunners of their destruction; and where these signs subsist we may look for judgments. The love of the world and rejection of the Gospel are the cause of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and all the subsequent calamities of that unhappy nation and people. And what are we better? Do we not reject a preached Gospel, and is not the world the god whom many worship? The thing is so glaring that it does not require proof. The Sabbaths of a jealous God are trampled under foot. The poor are oppressed, and if people get wealth it is no matter at whose expense. They make up the world at the expense of their neighbours, at the

expense of faith and of a good conscience; at the expense of truth, and at the expense of their souls. The same obstinacy in sin, the same sleep of conscience, the same marks of reprobation that the Jews had are now among Christians; and what will render us doubly inexcusable is that though we hear that the awful judgments of God are in other parts of the visible Church, we pursue the world as much as ever. We do nothing to avert the judgments of God that are now threatening us. This generation is sermon proof, dead in sin, and nothing, it seems, but judgment can awaken them.

Verse 18—"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

Before the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem the Christians who followed Christ's advice were saved from ruin by leaving the place in time. This was a type of the destruction of the world. If good men suffer here, the wicked may tremble at the hereafter. The righteous have enough to do to be saved after all their pains in religion; and if this be the case, what have the wicked to look for? He mentions two kinds of them—the ungodly, the sinner. The ungodly, such as are deficient in their duty to God. They know not Jehovah, like Pharaoh, and therefore retain their lusts. They do not worship God, and it is no wonder if they injure men. Where can these appear? Not among the people of God, surely. They had no pleasure in their company. And if these men had no pleasure in religion when upon earth, how can they relish it now when the world and their lusts have taken possession of their souls entirely? They must appear before God as an angry Judge, before whom they must appear dumb or speechless.

Verse 19—"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator."

The sufferings of the people of God are agreeable to His will, and calculated for their own good here and hereafter. And in order to be carried through properly they are to deliver the keeping of their souls to Himself. And when they do so they are to go in for a course of holy obedience. It is only in this way they can expect a gracious answer and a gracious termination to all their troubles.

INFERENCES.

1. It is the duty of Christians to cultivate their talents, and to do all the good they can to their fellow-creatures in a temporal and spiritual view. What shall we say to those who

employ their talents in doing mischief, hurting their fellow-creatures, and amassing wealth? We may say of them in the language of Scripture—"Good were it for that man if he had not been born." If some men are a blessing to mankind, these are a curse upon the face of the earth.

2. It is the duty of Christians to prepare for trials; and therefore people who are unwilling to suffer any inconvenience are ill-calculated for the profession. We are, when called upon, to suffer hardship for the cause of Christ. Some can go far and near to prosecute the world, but will grudge the smallest trouble for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. Where will such appear?

3. How mad are wicked people who speak ill of the people of God and His work upon their souls. He accounts such language as said against Himself. When grace shines in the unblameable life and conversation of a good Christian, to brand them with the odious name of fanatic, fool, knave, or hypocrite is a crime of the deepest dye. He that toucheth them touches the apple of His eye.

Lastly—If the sins of the day are sure signs or prognostics of future judgments, it is our wisdom to avert them by a general reformation and repentance. And should the majority even come that length that the prayers of a Daniel or Job could not avert the judgments, let a remnant return to God, and He can hide them in the hollow of His hand till the calamity do wholly overpass. And though His people cannot escape without temporal punishment, at any rate they will escape that awful flood of wrath which is to overwhelm the reprobate world for their sins.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On JOHN v. 40

John v. 40—"And ye will not come to me that ye might have life"

THIS is part of the conversation which our Lord had with the Jews soon after He had cured the man that lay at the Pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years. It seems He had performed His cure upon the Sabbath Day, and thus gave offence to the Jews. Our Lord's answer to them was that the great works of God were carried on upon the Sabbath Day as well as upon other days. Though God gave the Sabbath as a rule to His creatures, it was no rule to Himself, and this is our Lord's argument, for, says He, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God upheld the world upon the Sabbath. He might work a miracle, for He was the Son of God and the Lord of the Sabbath. A great man might forbid his tenants to fish his rivers and cut his woods, but this does not hinder himself or his beloved son and heir from doing either. When Joshua took Jericho the people surrounded that city seven days, and consequently they invested it on the Sabbath Day, so that the Jewish argument is idle and superstitious. What would be otherwise sinful becomes lawful when God makes it a commanded duty. Abraham was to offer up his only son, and his descendants, the Israelites, made war upon the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, and if these things were lawful at the command of God, was it not perfectly lawful for our Lord, at the command of God, and as the great Prophet of the Church to work miracles upon the Sabbath Day? Our Lord therefore desired them to search the Scriptures, for they surely found these things, which nothing but a Divine command could justify. And if they searched the Scriptures honestly they would find all these marks of the Messiah agree perfectly to our Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of doing so, He informs us in the words of the text that they would not come to Him in order to obtain life. In speaking upon this subject further, I shall show—

1. That everlasting life is to be found in our Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour.
2. That we become partakers of this life only by coming to Him and trusting in Him.
3. That if we do not believe, like the Jews, the fault must be imputed to our own wickedness and disobedience.

1. First, that everlasting life is to be found in our Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. Life or everlasting happiness is the wish and desire of all men, and though we forfeited our title to this life by our apostacy in Adam, the most sinful of mankind would wish to be happy. Now, the happiness enjoyed in heaven is here called life, and this life is in the Son, which will appear from the following reasons :—

(1.) Grace, which is the source of this life, dwelleth in Christ as its great original fountain.

(2.) Life is to be found in Him, for He laid down His own life to procure this life for His people.

(3.) That all the promises respecting this life pointed to Christ as their Author, and have their accomplishment in Him alone.

(4.) That this life and immortality is brought to light through His Gospel.

(1.) Grace, which is the source of this life, dwelleth in Christ as its great original Fountain. This we read in Scripture (Rev. xx. 6), that the river of life proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. What kind of life? Jesus Christ is both God and Man, for the Word was made flesh, and as such is the Great Fountain of joy and light and happiness, and this grace dwelt in Him before the world began, and it now dwelleth in Him as the Head of the Church, to be communicated to His people as their several needs may require. The fulness of the godhead dwelleth in Him bodily. We have several needs and miseries to supply and relieve. He has a fulness of light to dispel our doubts and our darkness, a fulness of merit to remove our guilt and a fulness of strength to remove our weaknesses and corruptions. Like one of the great rivers in the South and in the East that waters the soil and imparts fertility to all the country around, this river enters and passes through the city of our Lord God, and fills it with joy and gladness. Now, though there is life and grace in Christ originally, as He was God, yet it was necessary that He should become Man, that by His poverty we might become rich.

(2.) Life is to be found in Him, for He laid down His life to procure light for His people. We forfeited our life, and He removed the forfeiture by becoming Man, bearing the curse. It was necessary, then, that He should bestow spiritual life in a way becoming the Divine attributes. It comes to us from a Divine man as the reward of His sufferings and death. He shall see the labour of his soul in the spiritual life of thousands of His seed. He laid hold on our nature, and

became subject to sufferings on our account, and He must die that we might live. But though He was dead, He is alive, and will be for evermore. His death can remove our death, and promises spiritual and eternal life for us. Access to the tree of life was debarred by the flaming sword of Divine justice. That sword was plunged to the hilt in the breast of our suffering Surety and Saviour. He was wounded for our offences; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him. But though He died for our sins, He rose again for our justification. He procured us a title to life, and though sin shut the door, He has opened the portals of Paradise to us. He ascended on high after procuring gifts for men, and the great gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(3.) That all the promises respecting this life pointed to Christ as their Author, and have their accomplishment in Him alone. The promises are the life and comfort of the soul, and they all flow from Him. Himself spoke them by His Spirit in the Prophets, and encourages us to come to Him as our Surety, Hope and Refuge. He is the great substance of the promises, the meaning of the Scriptures, and the signification of all the ancient types and ceremonies. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the Ark of the Covenant to which the Cherubim of Glory look, and the wonderful Person to which all the ancient prophets call our attention. All the promises about Him are involved in sacred type and obscurity, but when the type and anti-type, the promise and event, are compared, they can apply to no other. And this one consideration is a source of joy and consolation to the souls of His people. When any soul is in distress, plunged in guilt and covered with crime, his iniquities great and his mind overwhelmed with doubt and terror, he seeks salvation and relief in something, but can never find it till he embraces the Gospel. If he looks up to God, His justice is a consuming fire; but he finds justice and mercy meeting and embracing in the Great Messiah. After searching the Scriptures with painful anxiety, he at last fixes upon Christ as the Rock of his salvation. He finds the promises, yea and amen, in Him, and therefore trusts his soul in His hands.

(4.) That this life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel. He has been in search of a Saviour through all the pages of the Old Testament. He finds there indeed precious promises about Him, but they are involved in obscurity. At last he opens his eyes on the Gospel. There he finds that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, that princes from the East worshipped Him after a wonderful star had announced His birth; that He led a holy life; that the Spirit was given Him above measure for the work He under-

took; that He was put to death, but rose again from the dead; that He commissioned others to preach and work miracles such as Himself wrought in the days of the flesh; that the doubts which remained upon the minds of mankind respecting a future life are entirely vanished, as the resurrection and ascension of Christ are a proof of never-ending happiness.

2. That we became partakers of this life only by coming to Him and trusting in Him. Coming to Christ must surely impart something more than coming to hear His Word and attending the means of religion. Many of the wicked unbelieving Jews followed Christ and saw His miracles but they did not believe or obey Him. Coming and believing are synonymous terms when faith, the instrument of our spiritual life, imparts the following things:—

(1.) That we believe His Word which tells us of our danger and misery by sin. (2.) That we believe the report the Gospel makes of a Saviour and that this Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ. (3.) That therefore we resign ourselves to Him to be justified, sanctified, and saved. That we give up ourselves to be directed by His Word and Spirit and follow Him in all holy obedience of life.

What kind of life is it which His people find in the Lord Jesus Christ?

(1). It is a life of holiness and virtue.

(2). It is a life of peace, joy and comfort.

(3). It is a life of strength and courage.

(4). It is a life that will constantly prepare us for the joys and pleasures of the next.

(1). The life we receive from Christ is a life of holiness and virtue. The life we receive from our father Adam is a natural life. It is a rational life, but much debased by the fall. It generally seeks happiness in inferior objects and aims at no higher. When Jesus Christ imparts His spirit to us we have a spiritual life and seek spiritual gratifications. And this life is generally called a life of faith or a life of grace. As our natural life is fed by meat and drink and is rendered happy by the profits and pleasures of this world, so spiritual life is fed by the Gospel, and we are rendered happy by the pleasures and promises of the Gospel. A man may be content that he has his daily bread. But if he has large farms and has plenty of money in the bank, we may say he is rich and consequently happy. Such a man is said to have a good living; and, in general, people are more or less rich as they are more or less industrious. In the spiritual life every man that believes has food for his soul, but some are

rich in faith. Every man that believes is a partaker of holiness and leads a life of virtue. Faith will turn our water into wine. Our moral actions, nay, our indifferent actions, now become acts of faith and labours of love. Whatever we do is for the glory of God.

(2). It is a life of joy and comfort. Faith, in the very nature of it, brings comfort to the soul as the sun brings light and heat. Now, the spiritual, like the natural light, increases to the perfect day. Ask a worldly man what increases his joy and comfort. He can readily tell that whatever increases his substance and enlarges the circle of his pleasures will increase both. Now, our virtues and graces, our prayers and our stock of promises are our spiritual riches and our cause of joy; the more we do or suffer for Christ the more happy we are. The more we promote His glory the richer ourselves are. We have heard of prize money. If the prize is great the poorest soldier makes his fortune. How should it animate our hopes and our endeavours that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord?

The more we improve in holiness and virtue the more happy we are. There are degrees of vigour and liveliness in the spiritual as in the natural life. There are some creatures that have life but cannot move, and others that can move but slowly. Great is the difference between these and the hart and wild roe on the mountains, or the birds of the air. Now it is true there is joy and purity in the least measure of faith, when a man believes he passes from death to life, and this belief purifies the conscience. But weak faith has great fears and cannot move with alacrity in the ways of God. The consequence is, there are many desponding thoughts, and the conscience is often defiled with unbelief. But when a man makes progress in the spiritual life he goes on his way rejoicing: the more we are purified the stronger we grow.

(3). It is a life of strength and courage. There are some strong in the faith, giving glory to God. Our spiritual life is a warfare, for we struggle not only against our own corruptions, but also against principalities and powers, and when we make advances in the life of faith, we put to flight these armies of the alien. We read in heathen authors of some warriors who fought with desperate courage, believing themselves to be under the immediate protection of some god. Now, this imaginary protection inspired courage. How much more will the faith of the Gospel? Faith in divine protection made David, a stripling, go forth boldly against the champion of Gath. He tells us in one of his Psalms that, depending on this, he leaped over a wall and broke bars of steel. God Almighty addressed Joshua, the generalissimo.

of His people, in these words:—"Have not I commanded thee to be strong and of good courage? Consequently, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." And the Apostle assures us that this divine promise belongs to all the followers of the Lamb. In the path of duty and in the struggles of faith there is assistance promised, which will overcome the powers of hell. Our cause is good, our Leader is glorious, and the victory is sure. What animated the Great Head of the Church against the combined forces of men and the devil? It was the glorious reward that was promised. When David, who was a type of the suffering Saviour, conquered his enemies, the soldiers got their large share of the spoil. And what may encourage poor, trembling souls that would wish to fight the Lord's battles and are hindered by unbelief? We read that King David gave an equal share of the spoil to the poor men that fainted at the Brook Besor. And can we suppose that our Lord has less feeling or love for His poor trembling followers that would wish to follow Him in the heat of the battle? The very lame shall take the prey, and He knows every man that wishes well to His cause.

(4). It is a life that will constantly prepare us for the joys and pleasures of the next. The glorious description we read in Scripture of the heavenly Canaan will encourage us to fight our way, and prepare our souls for such scenes of bliss and happiness. If a man is born to an estate it is impossible but he will be thinking of it. When his reason begins to ripen he studies by education and politeness to prepare himself for his estate, that he may enjoy it with becoming dignity and honour. The true Christian heir of heaven purifies himself, even as he is pure, for the incorruptible inheritance. He will occasionally ascend the Hill of Pisgah, and take a view of the Promised Land. He finds a map of his inheritance in the Book of God. He knows that the map can give him but a faint idea of the place, for imagination cannot conceive the glories of heaven. All the Israelites in general possessed the earthly Canaan, but the great tribes of Judah and Joseph possessed a large share. The great saints will have a large share of the heavenly inheritance. The bounds of our inheritance are appointed in this same world, and the Kingdom of Heaven is prepared before the foundation of the world. These bright thoughts should animate our hopes and prepare us, by holy living, for a happy immortality. As we approach nearer, our prospects will become more bright and more enlarged. Good men, in imitation of Moses and Christ, will ascend the Mount of Contemplation to converse with God and prepare for heaven. Such thoughts will purify the heart and enlarge our benevolence. And if ourselves have

some humble hopes of seeing that beautiful country, we shall constantly excite and encourage others to set their faces towards Zion, for great things are spoken of the City of our God.

1. That we believe His Word, which tells of our danger and misery by sin. If we believe the Word of God in general we must believe every particular part. We are to believe what it says to ourselves, in the first place. A great part of the Word consists of precepts, promises and threatenings. And these are general, for they speak to all that hear them. Now, it is a miserable perversion of language to call people believers if they deny any part of the Word. And it tells us all that we are sinners. It speaks to each man in particular, as Nathan to David, "Thou art the man." We must believe the law, then, and the law denounces our danger and misery. The law curses us as sinners, and exposes our souls naked to the wrath of an infinite God. These are alarming truths, and if we calmly put our hands upon our hearts we may well say that very few believe them. Instead of this, the great majority of Gospel hearers go on in a course of gay insensibility, and take no concern in these matters. And as to those who have the appearance of seriousness, many of them go to the law itself that wounded them, for a cure. Now, though the law can wound, it never did heal. And if we seek comfort from our duties we labour in vain. If we rest here and do not look higher we are under the curse. The tree must be good before it can bring forth good fruit, and if it does not bring forth good fruit it must be cast into the fire. If we rest in our mere duties, and in bare morality without holiness, we are undone. The law is calculated to humble us that we may be fit subjects for Christ. To attempt to obey the law in a state of enmity and unbelief while we are strangers to Christ is impossible. The law, then, is our schoolmaster to lead us to a Saviour that we may be justified by faith. When we find ourselves in the state the Israelites were in when in Egyptian bondage, we cry and long for a Deliverer.

2. That we believe the report the Gospel makes of a Saviour, and that this Saviour is the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe the law the Gospel becomes precious to our souls. The Gospel reveals a Saviour adapted to cure every condition. He came to save those that were lost, and when we believe this to be our own condition, the Gospel becomes welcome news—"Unto you that believe He is precious." Now, the Gospel reveals the very Person that can heal our souls, and this is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not enough to believe that there is a Saviour, but that this Saviour is the Man Christ Jesus. Now, the Gospel assures us that this Saviour is able and willing to save. Our disease consists in the following

things :—(1) Unbelief and enmity, (2) unwillingness, (3) insensibility, (4) weakness and pride that refuses to be justified by the Gospel terms, and if we are sensible of our disease the Gospel assures us that Jesus Christ can give a cure. If we feel, then, our unbelief and our enmity, there is a cure in the Gospel. What is more calculated to cure both than a contemplation of redeeming love? “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have eternal life.” Now, cursed unbelief is ready to say He may have loved others though He does not love me; but why not you in particular? Because I feel enmity, because I am a great sinner. But these are not obstacles to redeeming love. If they were, who could be saved? The way to overcome them is to embrace and believe the Gospel. We cannot be sensible of redeeming love by keeping at a distance from Christ. To cast ourselves upon the mercy and pity of the Saviour is the sure way to feel His love. If we feel unwillingness and insensibility, our cure is in the Gospel. Our passions and lusts make us insensible of our danger, and therefore unwilling, and because we feel ourselves unwilling we think the Saviour unwilling also. The Gospel assures us He is willing, for He gave proof of His goodwill to sinners. What can encourage us more to believe and make us willing to come so much as the precious calls, invitations, and promises of the Gospel. And what can raise our fear like the terrors of the Lord which the Gospel assures us hang over these who neglect and despise the joyful sound? And if we feel weakness and pride that refuses to be justified upon Gospel terms, our cure is in the Gospel itself. We feel our weakness, and yet such is our pride that we are unwilling to yield to the terms of the Gospel and live as poor pensioners upon free grace. The advocate for mere outward morality will hold faith a very different language indeed. He talks of the beauty of virtue and the fitness of things, and will hold forth several arguments for a good life, but when Jesus Christ is kept out of sight how can a man perform the duties of the law, for we are naturally without strength, and must remain so till we truly believe. Will it be said that the preaching of faith alone as the means or instrument of our justification does not produce morality? It produces much more. It makes morality, which was before a dead image, become a living principle, and bring forth fruit unto God. We resign ourselves to Jesus Christ to be justified, sanctified and saved. We give up ourselves to be directed by His Word and Spirit, and follow Him in all holy obedience of life. Seeing our misery, we accept of justification through free grace, feeling our obligation and stimulated by a principle

of love and true gratitude to God, we shall be careful to maintain good work. Our obedience will flow from the true principle, and therefore our spring will not become dry. Before faith a man's actions terminated in self, whether they be acts of generosity, of justice, of humanity, or patriotism, or of public spirit. Thus if we do not believe, like the Jews, the fault must be imputed to our own wickedness and disobedience. It is true our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that a man cannot believe of himself. It is equally true that he blames sinners for their unbelief, and shows them the malignity of the crime, and unbelief is our sin for these reasons :—

(1) Instead of believing, we harbour and nurse our unbelief.

(2) We indulge and feed the lusts that give life and strength to this cursed principle.

(1) Instead of believing we harbour and nurse our unbelief. If this was not the case it would not prove our ruin. When it becomes a burden we struggle and pray against it. In that case it will not destroy us. But when we are unwilling to believe and wish to continue blind, our case is dangerous and our sin is great.

(2) We indulge and feed the lusts that give life and strength to this cursed principle. The favourite lust or passion always gives a sweet morsel to unbelief to feed on. The Jews dreamed of the earthly kingdom of the Messiah, and were therefore groping after posts, places and pensions under Him. Our Lord therefore asks how can ye believe who receive honour one from another? And the question will apply to all other sins and vices that blind the eyes of the mind and hinder our reception of the Gospel.

INFERENCES.

As life is in Christ and unbelief a great sin, we may examine what sins hinder our believing, and they are the following :—

(1) If the Jews were kept back from Christ by a superstitious and over-much attachment to the Sabbath, many of us are kept from Him by mere contempt and indifference to the Sabbath. We leave it with your consciences which are the greatest sinners, you or the Jews, for both refuse to believe? We have double malignity.

(2) An unhappy attachment to tattles and idle stories that profit neither soul nor body. The great Apostle of the Gentiles made but few converts in the city of Athens. Have you a

curiosity to know the cause? They were like many among ourselves. They had an insatiable curiosity for news, and though it is an idle passion, it drowns and enervates every noble sentiment in the soul. Story-tellers are generally liars, and these have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. As they despised eternal life, they shall suffer the second death.

(3) Lastly — Hatred and want of brotherly love. If this malignant poison dwells in any heart it is impossible the love of God could find room; and even though we should not find real hatred to any person, yet if our hearts are destitute of true Christian love, we cannot believe. The cause of this is either pride or an unhappy attachment to our own little interest. Whatever keeps us from Christ keeps us from life, and will land us in the dreary regions of darkness and death.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On JOHN i. 45-46

John i. 45-46.—“ Philip findeth Nathaniel and saith unto him,” etc.

WHEN man fell from his original purity, God gave a gracious promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. The promise was long delayed, and during a long succession of prophets it was often renewed. The Messiah, or Saviour, is called often in Scripture, “He who is to come.” As the books of the Old Testament were translated into the Greek language, the heathen had access to them, and therefore a desire after such a Saviour as is there described. Hence He is styled the desire of all nations. The chosen nation in particular had Him clearly pointed out in the writings of Moses and the prophets, so that they might know Him when He came. Both Jews and Gentiles were prepared for His appearance. Such as examined the writings of the prophets acknowledged Him by the marks He gave of His Messiahship.

DOCTRINE.

1. Point out some of the marks by which Philip might know that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah mentioned in the writings of Moses and the prophets.

2. That the prejudices which people have against the Saviour may be effectually removed when they judge for themselves, examine the Gospel and come to see Christ.

1. Moses, besides the general promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, mentions the time of the Messiah's appearance, viz., when the sceptre should depart from Judah. And we know that this happened for many centuries past. The Jews were deprived of all civil authority, for they had a Roman Governor, and when they accused the Lord Jesus Christ before him, they told him it was not lawful for them to put any man to death (John xviii. 31). Moses likewise informed them that God would raise up among them a Prophet like unto Him, and that they were to hear him, and such as would not hear Him and obey Him, God would require it at His hands. Now, though there was a succession of prophets among the Jews from Moses to Malachi, there was none like to Moses in all respects till the

appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moses, in his infancy, was persecuted and saved from the cruelty of the tyrant of Egypt. Herod sought to slay Jesus, and He was carried to Egypt to avoid his fury. Moses was refused by his own countrymen in Egypt, and he was obliged to flee into the country of Midian, but when the time of the promise drew nigh he was chosen by God to deliver His nation from Egyptian bondage. Our Lord was rejected by the Jewish nations, but he became the headstone of the corner and the saviour of Jews and Gentiles. When Moses delivered the law he fasted forty days and forty nights. When Christ began to preach the Gospel He likewise fasted forty days and forty nights. Moses wrought astonishing miracles in the field of Zoan, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness of Arabia. Our Lord wrought still more astonishing miracles through the whole of Palestine, healing the sick, curing diseases, opening the eyes and the ears of the blind and of the deaf, casting out devils, raising the dead, and healing the soul. He rebuked temporal and spiritual diseases with His Word, and all nature obeyed Him as her Sovereign. Moses spoke familiarly to God, or, as the Scriptures expresses it, "face to face," as a man does to his friend. Although there were many prophets under the Old Testament, we do not read that any of them had such near access to God as Moses had. But Jesus Christ is the great Interpreter of the Father; the fulness of the godhead dwelt in Him bodily. And as the great Prophet of the Church He hath revealed to us all the doctrines necessary to salvation. The Spirit of God was in Christ as water in a fountain, naturally and constantly. He was in the prophets only now and then, as water in a cistern or vessel. And it may be said that the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Sanctification, did not dwell in the best of men or of prophets without any interruption, for they fell into sin, and had not the same measure of the Spirit continually present with them.

Lastly, Moses was a mediator between God and the people. When the people fell into sin and offended God, Moses prayed, and God was reconciled. In the battle between Israel and Amalek, while Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed, and when he let them down, Amalek prevailed. The true Mediator between God and man is the Man Jesus Christ. His intercession prevails in heaven for His people, and when He was upon earth God always heard Him, and gave Him the answers of His prayers. Now, Philip might have access to know the truth and examine the writings of Moses with his own eyes. A Jew without letters, born in Palestine, might easily know the prophecy of Jacob, recorded in the Book of Genesis, and as he mentions likewise the

prophets, it is clear that he compared the writings of Moses and of the prophets with the life, the doctrine, and the miracles of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord did not desire the Jews to believe in Him without searching the Scriptures and examining whether the prophecies and the events corresponded or not. Philip might also know the time of His appearance from the Book of Daniel, and the place of His birth from the Prophecy of Micah; and if Philip had not examined the Word of God and the pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth, how could he invite another to believe in him. We observe in particular that he called Him Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. Scripture often calls Him the Son of David. And the Apostle Paul, in Rom. i. 3, assures us He was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, from which it clearly appears that the Blessed Virgin was of the Royal Family of David, and that Nathaniel, as well as Paul, believed Him to be the Messiah of a truth.

Nazareth was an obscure city in the district of Galilee, and St Matthew, from the writings of the prophets, proves that He should be called a Nazarene. And how does this appear? If we look into the 11th of Isaiah in the original language, we find that the Messiah is called Netzer, which we translate branch. From whatever cause our Lord got the name, it is clear from Scripture He is denominated Jesus of Nazareth, and as the Name might originate from the word Netzer, though the Jews gave it by way of reproach to our Saviour, they spoke the truth without designing it, for He is truly the Branch. And if we suppose the word Nazareth to be derived from the word Nazar, which signifies to divide or separate, or to be separated. The Nazarites were separated in a peculiar manner to the service of God. And this is the general character of the Messiah, for He is called the Most Holy (Daniel ix. 24), so that He shall be called a Nazarene inasmuch as He shall be a Nazarene, that is, "He shall be peculiarly separated and set apart to the service of God." He was set apart like Joseph, and if this is true of Joseph and Samson, who were eminent types of Christ, how much more is it true about Himself. He was crowned among His brethren (compare Exodus xii. 48, with John xix. 36), and that they were types of Christ we learn from some of the writings of the Jews themselves; and it is the general doctrines of the prophets that He would be despised and rejected of men, and separated from His brethren, so that whether we derive the word Nazarene from the Hebrew word, "Netzer" or "Nazar," they will equally apply to Christ. And it is equally the doctrine of the prophets concerning Him. The psalmist, another eminent type, says :—"I am but a stranger to my brethren, and from

these circumstances put together, it is evident that Christ was a true Nazarite—Netzer, the Branch, separated to the service of God, and separate from His brethren. And by the secret providence of God He was brought up in a town which gave Him a name suitable to His character; and as Philip knew all this, he points out Jesus of Nazareth as the true Christ or Messiah spoken of by the prophets. The circumstances of His birth, His genealogy from the Royal Family of David, and, above all, his astonishing miracles and works, of which mention is made in the writings of the prophets, might induce Philip to believe in Jesus of Nazareth Himself, and point Him out to others as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. The doctrine of John the Baptist, like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, had prepared the way for the Saviour, and made His appearance more conspicuous. His doctrine and many of His miracles were in Galilee, so that another remarkable prophecy was fulfilled in the heavenly light that illuminated the dark corner, Zebulun and Naphtali. Multitudes followed Him to be cured of their diseases and got comfort to their souls. And the prophecy concerning Shiloh had the accomplishment in the gathering of people that were always about the Saviour. Philip searched the Scriptures to find eternal life, and found this life in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

2. That the prejudices which people may have against the Saviour, when the language of their hearts, like Nathaniel, may be—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" are most effectually removed when such persons judge for themselves, examine the Gospel, and come to see the Saviour. We are not to take our religions upon trust, but ought to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. The Gospel can bear examination; it has gone through the fiery trial once and again; and we may likewise try the gold that has been often tried in the fire to enrich our souls. Unbelievers of all kinds and degrees have made their several attacks. The Gospel, like a great rock in the midst of the ocean, withstood the several storms that assaulted it. The waves have dashed themselves to pieces upon the rocks, and the rock has remained firm and unmoveable. Every human heart has naturally prejudices against the Gospel, for the God of this world will endeavour to darken our minds with prejudices lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine upon our souls. Even good Nathaniel has his own share of prejudices against Christ. "Can any good thing," he says, "come out of Nazareth?" And we have our prejudices likewise, and let us get them removed by coming to see Christ shining in the light of the Gospel. The human heart, then, has prejudices against the Divinity of Christ, His

sacrifice and atonement for sin, against His power and ability to save, against His willingness to save, owing to our great sins and the hardness of our hearts; and, lastly, against the freedom and extensiveness of the Gospel call.

1. Our carnal reason has prejudices against the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we were to examine the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost by the mere light of nature we shall blaspheme this precious mystery. "The deep things of God" are beyond our reach. Reason will ask, "How can a man be God?" Scripture will answer that, as a Man, He was born in Bethlehem. As He was a Divine Person He existed from eternity. A mean tradesman might ask how is it possible for a man of low birth to be a king. Though this is not possible for him, it is not impossible for the King to learn a mean trade and to work in a poor tradesman's shop. This, however, would be nothing in comparison to the Son of God becoming Man. How can this be? Let us attend to the language of Scripture for removing our prejudices. There we are informed that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. There is nothing here contrary to reason, for God, if He chose, might assume a human form. He did so under the Old Testament. And the Judge of all the earth spake to Abraham in the shape of a Man. It has been a general belief among mankind that God may reveal His will to mankind, and that He has done so, and this is agreeable to the Divine goodness and mercy. Scripture assures us that the will of God has been revealed to us in diverse ways. At last He assumed our human nature, and spoke to us in the Person of Jesus Christ; and if we ask with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" the Gospel informs us that we cannot effectually believe this great mystery without the grace of God, for no man can come to the Son except the Father draw him. And the Gospel assures us that the assistance of the Holy Spirit is promised to those who earnestly and seriously pray for it. And we are encouraged to pray and not faint.

Let us take a view of God in the Person of Christ, for the Word was united to this Man. If the most learned man in Europe came to visit our country in a very mean dress, from his appearance we would take him only for an ordinary person. But when he begins to speak, and when we discover his learning, we change our opinion, and find that he is our superior in every respect. Upon this discovery we pay him all the attention that is due to great learning and great talents united in a man of respectable moral character. When our Lord appeared upon this earth Scripture informs us that He had no form or comeliness. He had not that grandeur and pomp which are the usual attendants upon Royalty. Accord-

ingly, the Jews despised a Deliverer that made such a humble appearance, and their language was, "We will not have this Man to rule over us." But those who saw His spiritual beauty and majesty were the willing captives of His grace. His great works at first excited their curiosity and attention, and, indeed, they must have struck all that beheld them with astonishment. However lowly His appearance, they saw that this Man was some extraordinary Personage. They saw the dead raised, the leper cleansed, the sick healed, and evil spirits dispossessed. They saw that this was the finger of God, and that it could not be the work of evil spirits, as His enemies maliciously said. These effects were beyond their power, and, indeed, beyond the power of any creature; and, besides, evil spirits could have no pleasure in doing good to the souls and bodies of mankind. Christ, then, was a Divine Person, the Son of God.

2. We have the prejudices against His atonement and the sacrifice He made for sin. Now, to get this prejudice removed let us come to the Gospel. There we are informed that Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and Himself informs us that His blood was shed for the remission of sin. John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Great Sacrifice for sin. The very light of nature dictates to us that something is necessary to remove guilt and reconcile people to God. Sacrifices began very early with mankind, and they were positively commanded in the Law of Moses. Mankind then saw the necessity of bloody sacrifices for 4000 years, and the people of God among the rest. When God Almighty commanded sacrifices He had surely something higher in view than the death of the poor animal, for the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. But perhaps it will be said that it is unreasonable that one Man should suffer for the guilty. Let it be asked, then, in what other way is guilt to be removed and the conscience pacified? Some say by repentance and reformation. To this it is easily answered that repentance and reformation are not sufficient to satisfy conscience. If the conscience is in true earnest we can say with truth that the more there is of repentance, the more uneasy the conscience feels, and for this we can appeal to the experience of thousands of our guilty race. How shall I appear before the Lord? is the language of many. Accordingly they perform duties, and give alms. These give a temporary relief, but do not radically cure sin, or remove guilt. Such characters are like the woman in the Gospel who spent her all upon physicians and never grew better but became worse. And when we complain of sin we must do as she did—have recourse to the Saviour. This

was the method David took. "Sprinkle me with hyssop," he says; "wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." He had recourse to the great sacrifice, for Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. King David is the great standard of orthodoxy in the Old Testament. He acknowledges his original depravity from whence springs his great actual transgressions. When he saw his sin he prayed to be sprinkled with hyssop. He surely knew the typical meaning of it, for hyssop could not of itself wash his soul. When his broken heart was prepared to embrace the great sacrifice, he promises the sacrifice prescribed by law, and prays for the peace of Jerusalem. We do not read in the Old Testament that any person was so innocent as that he did not stand in need of offering a sacrifice for sin. His pardon was obtained by the death of the slaughtered animal, the innocent victim. Now, Christ is our sacrifice, for He took away our sins. He bore them in His own body on the tree. This burden He willingly undertook for our sakes. It was an astonishing act of grace in Almighty God to find out an offering in behalf of our guilty race. The offering was of such value and dignity as necessarily took away all our sins. There is room made for the display of mercy, and the demands of justice are satisfied, and God's honour vindicated, for sin is punished in our surety, as He willingly undertook to do so. Unwilling as we are to part with our own righteousness, we must do so when we come to see Christ. The Gospel gives us a different view of the matter. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And however innocent our lives and respectable our characters, we are guilty in the sight of God and stand in need of Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest, and if we are great sinners let us not reject our own mercy.

3. We have prejudice against His power and ability to save. By nature we are unbelievers, for faith is the gift of God and not the production of our natural powers. When the blind men applied to Him for their sight, He asked if they believed He was able to give them the blessing they wanted. Perhaps I would affront an ordinary Christian if I asked him does he really believe that Christ can actually save him. To a Christian, however, of deep experience the question would not seem strange or surprising. The knowledge he has of his heart makes him see the propriety of the question. He is acquainted with the working of corruption and the strength of unbelief. A man of common prudence, if he delivers his money to another, will ask legal security. He will enquire whether the bank be safe, whether the security is sufficient or not. And does not common sense and spiritual wisdom require that the person to whom we would deliver our souls

is equal to the task He undertakes? Can any being less than God Almighty save a soul? If He had not been a Divine Person could He perform the work He did? His own arm wrought salvation for Him. When Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea, it is not said that Moses overthrew the Egyptians and delivered Israel, but that the Lord destroyed the Egyptians and saved Israel that day. It was God that purchased the Church with His own blood. Christ is a Divine Person, else He could not save. It was God Himself in our human nature that wrought the great work of redemption, and if we have doubts about His ability to save, let us come to the Gospel and see. The description the Gospel gives of Him is this:—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," or as it may be, "God was the Word." "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made," "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." In the writings of the Apostle Paul he tells us that all things were created by Christ, whether they be things in heaven or in earth. And in the first Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the Son, he says:—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." If the writings of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, they agree in this, that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. This is He who was to be David's Son and David's Lord, the Saviour of His people, whose arm brought salvation to him, and who is able to save to the uttermost all who came to God through Him. The work subduing corruption and saving the soul is beyond the power of man. It is God that can give the new heart, and Jesus is exalted a Prince and Saviour to give repentance and the remission of sins. When He was upon earth, besides the miracles He wrought in the natural world, He gave the new heart by a word. When He said "Let there be light," there was light in the soul. When He said "Follow Me," the man was a Christian in an instant. The man saw the value of a Saviour, and in spite of persecution, suffering, and death he attached himself to His cause. He changed a man's heart and sentiment in a moment, and after His exaltation to heaven He gave such efficacy to the Word of grace that thousands and tens of thousands were converted by the preaching of a few despised fishermen from Galilee. He spoke to Paul by a voice from heaven, and in a moment changed his heart. To this day He speaks by His Word to sinners in the Gospel. Their minds are opened by His Spirit to see the glory of the Saviour. They believe in His ability and power to save. They trust in Him for salvation, their doubts are solved, their bonds are loosed, their

corruptions are conquered, and they are restored to the liberty of the sons of God. By believing in his free salvation they get comfort to their souls; by trusting in His power their souls are at rest.

4. We have prejudice against his willingness to save owing to our great sins and the hardness of our hearts. Such is the corruption of human nature that people reckon an innocent life and a very guilty life equally stumbling blocks to keep us from the Saviour. If people are not conscious of any great guilt, why would they come? They hope to be saved by their virtuous behaviour and religious duties. They cannot relish the idea that they stand in need of a Saviour as much as the greatest sinner. The doctrine of original guilt and universal depravity they are mere strangers to, so that they see not their need of such a Saviour as the Scripture describes. If they are guilty of great and crying sins, and find their hearts hard, they find it very difficult to believe that He is willing to save, and that the greatest of sinners are welcome to His full redemption. It is not an easy matter to believe that God is willing when the creature is unwilling, and yet this is a great as well as a delightful truth. Christ was willing, but He complains of the unwillingness of the Jews to come to Him. He died for enemies and ungodly persons. We do not naturally love enemies, and we are not easily brought to believe that God loves us when sinners. The Scripture doctrine is that He saw us in our blood, that He loved us in that condition, and this we are called to believe.

5. Lastly—We have prejudice against the freedom and extensiveness of the Gospel call. We might naturally think that sinners would receive the joyful sound with all acceptance. The reverse is, alas, too true; they think it should not be free. They must do something to purchase the grace of God, and this is universal of our race; some lay weight upon one thing, some upon another, and small is the twig they lay hold of, rather than submit to the righteousness of Christ. Though they have no objection to universal redemption if they could prove it true, great is their objection to the thought that the greatest sinner is fully as welcome if he comes to Christ as the most virtuous and respectable moral characters. There is no difference, for the one is very guilty before God, though not so very criminal in the sight of men as the other. They are offended that great criminals have the same right to come to Christ as themselves, who scarcely stand in need of salvation, if their own account of their obedience be true; and owing to this great pride of our nature the great sinner must

wait a while, qualifying himself by his own endeavours, that he may do something to recommend himself to Christ. We are required to believe and not to work; and what is faith but seeing our need of a Saviour and coming to Him for life. I have said that we are to believe and not to work in order to receive Christ. If I think to qualify myself by my own works for receiving the grace of Christ, I do not understand the nature of the Gospel. If any work prepares me for Christ it is repentance, and this is properly His own work and His own gift to the soul. I cannot bring repentance to qualify me, for I must humbly ask it if I have it not, and if I have it I cannot call it my own, for it is the work of the Spirit of God. Let us then come to the Gospel to remove this prejudice. The willingness of Christ to save is clear from every page of the Gospel, and if he was not willing to save great sinners, who could apply? It is a well known fact in the spiritual world that every man sees some malignity in his own sin that makes him conclude himself to be the chief of sinners; and if He would not be willing to save great, very great sinners, He could not be a complete Saviour. Christ invites sinners without exception of all ranks and conditions; the offer is extensive and the call general. Secret things belong to God. The call is given to all those who receive and those who reject it. The virtuous receive the call to show that they are guilty before God. The most wicked and abandoned are called to show how astonishing His grace and mercy is to sinners. Those who embrace the call are monuments of rich and free grace. Those who despise and reject it are inexcusable, so that justice and mercy shine in the Gospel.

INFERENCES.

The following reflections naturally arise from the doctrine we heard :—

1. That all men in some sense or other have prejudices against the doctrine of Christ. The language of our hearts is—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Will the Gospel make up every want and fill every vacancy in my soul? Come and see. If we would get our spiritual wants satisfied, let us honestly search the field of the Gospel for the pearl of great price. Christ is here, the promised Messiah, in whom all fulness dwells.

2. If we have honestly searched and examined the Gospel, and do not after all find comfort, let us next examine ourselves. Do we regard iniquity in our hearts? Do we sincerely aim to do the will of God? Are we willing to be taught by the Spirit?

Let us earnestly pray for His enlightening influences, and submit our hearts, our motives, and our actions to His heavenly motions and to His salutary doctrines. Let us come with honest desires, and with these pitchers let us draw water out of the wells of salvation.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On I. TIMOTHY iv. 16

I. Timothy iv. 16—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them : for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

A STANDING ministry is one of the greatest benefits purchased by the death of Christ. It is a proof of the ascension and exaltation of our glorious Redeemer in heaven. The Jewish writers inform us that the people, as well as the High Priest himself, were in anxious apprehension about his life when he went, in his pontifical robes, once in the year to the holy of holies. Accordingly, he had bells on the bottom of his robes, that the least step or motion might be heard, and it is probable, at least in part, that there is an allusion to this in that beautiful passage in Psalm 89, 15th verse—"Blessed is the people that hear the joyful sound." Our Lord, as High Priest and King of His Church, is ascended on high. We hear the joyful sound of the Gospel according to His promise, and this melodious sound shall be heard in the Church till He makes His second appearance. The shout of a King is in the Church, and this is the voice of the Gospel, when God comes with the right hand of His power. Ministers are compared to the lights of heaven, on account of their usefulness to the Church; and they must be either stars of light or black, wandering stars of darkness. Whatever pleasure people may have in hearing their own duties preached to them, they like very well to hear the duties of a minister. And this is what I mean, with God's assistance, to point out to you this day. If such a man as Timothy stood in need of an advice it will be readily acknowledged that every minister to the end of the world will stand in need of advice likewise. Your attention is therefore called to this precious and voluminous text which was just read in your hearing. You have here, therefore—

1. The duty of a minister.

2. The motive to perform his duty.

1. The duty of a minister. A certain author, speaking of Satan, sin and death, says that they made a wonderful bridge between hell and this world to carry over the spirits

of darkness and all kinds of misery to the earth. And the sure Word of Revelation informs us that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Ladder that unites and joins heaven and earth. And every minister of the Gospel, in an inferior sense, is concerned in this work likewise. The Gospel is the canal that joins the two great oceans—the eternity that is past to the eternity which is to come. It reveals to us truths and mysteries which in past ages were hid from mankind; but now pour forth their light upon the dark corners of the earth. The work of a clergyman is great, and his duty is difficult and cannot well be contained in the bounds of a single discourse. But the Apostle gives an example here, and I shall study clear brevity. The clergyman's duty, therefore, is—

1. To take heed to himself.
2. To take heed to the doctrine.

1. To take heed to himself. Much depends upon the life and conversation of a clergyman. They are called angels in allusion to their office. They are compared to angels on account of their purity. The angels that stood in their uprightness are called holy and elect angels. And those that fell are called devils. There is no middle state. In like manner, the minister must be either the servant of God or the standard bearer of the devil. He must be therefore cautious about his conduct. It is not to be supposed that the Apostle as much as suspected Timothy of any gross immorality. But a clergyman, if he is not guarded in his walk, may do several things that may disgrace his profession, even though free from gross crimes. In the dissipated city of Ephesus the virtuous, the holy Timothy may be in danger if he does not take heed to himself. The minister must beware—

- (1) Of light and frivolous behaviour and small things.
- (2) Of overmuch attachment to his worldly interest.
- (3) Of too great fondness for company and idle amusement.

(1) He must beware of light and frivolous behaviour and small things. One of the characters of things required in the Scripture bishop is gravity. True, solid joy and a serene, calm disposition of the soul is very different from foolish mirth. A clergyman may be innocently cheerful and sometimes mix serious things with harmless pleasantry without descending so low as to act the part of a comedian upon the stage. It was customary once for great men to have fools in their family to divert the company, and is it not a pity that a clergyman would so far forget himself as to divert any company at his own expense. They may like him as children

love a Merry Andrew or puppet show; but they secretly despise him in their hearts. The Apostle forbids foolish jesting, and, indeed, people serve the devil as effectually by words having a double meaning as by gross immoralities. But to put this in the strongest light: let the conversation of such a person in company for two or three hours be gathered and put in print. What an awful appearance it would make to the public. I can take upon me to say that in primitive times the conversation of an individual clergyman, or a number of them, met together could bear repetition. It might be even printed for the edification of the Church. A certain man said once if a tinker were to hear the conversation of some ministers what comparison would he make in his own mind. I leave this to my hearers.

(2) He must beware of over-much attachment to his worldly interest. Our Lord says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. In the company of farmers, merchants and drovers it is natural to hear them talk about their different professions. Even in such company we sometimes hear a serious hint which a man is the better of, and when the ambassadors of the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory meet is it not natural that we would hear something about Him? What shall we say? "Tell it not in Gath. Publish it not in Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Do we not see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, does not the world contaminate the very breath of the clergy? I was reading in Church history of a great bishop who was celebrating high mass to his people. While he was engaged in this solemn work, his groom comes in to tell him that such a mare had a foal. He left the work and went to the stable. Are my hearers, the congregation and the clergy, shocked and offended at the conduct of such a monster? Allow me, my dear friends, to adopt the language of a holy prophet to a penitent king—"Thou art the man." You, my friends, have witnessed the celebration of the Lord's Supper. What conversation have you heard upon the afternoon of such a Sabbath, without making an exception of the clergy? Would not a stranger that heard them without seeing them suppose that it was the dairymaid speaking to the cow-herd? Instead of hearing the language of the prophets and apostles, you hear the dialect of drovers and sheep farmers. By this time I suppose you have some fellow-feeling for the bishop that went to the stable. He is not such a monster as you thought him.

Scripture informs us that a covetous man will have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God and of Christ, and if a

covetous Christian is a bad character, a covetous clergyman is still worse. The language of the Lord Jesus Christ to the clergyman is this—"Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." If he should neglect to feed them, can we suppose that the following excuse will be sustained at the judgment seat?—"Lord, I had a large farm and a great number of cattle and sheep of my own, and I had no time to look after the sheep and lambs of Christ." I fear his apology will be cast. The unprofitable servant will be speechless. May the God of heaven rouse His servants in the ministry. The most hardened infidel cannot be indifferent to this doctrine at the near approach of eternity. But again—

(3) The clergyman must take heed and beware of too great fondness for company and idle amusement. It was melancholy acknowledgment that a poor clergyman, given much to company, made upon the bed of death. When desired by some friends to pray in his distress, he said it was too late. There is an awful curse mentioned in Scripture against the weak-kneed. "Let their table become a snare." Accordingly, our Lord Jesus Christ cautions His Apostles against gluttony and drunkenness and the cares of this life. Their followers are in danger of these sins, both from the wicked and the people of God sometimes. They have different ends. The one ensnares them to oppose them, and even good men may make them exceed from mere kindness. It is true our Lord Jesus was in the company of publicans and sinners. So must we occasionally, and if we have the same view our Lord had we shall be kept from shame. His design was to save them. Jesus Christ was God and Man. And he knew the kind of publicans and sinners upon whom His doctrine would have effect. We do not. And therefore, instead of reforming, we may be in danger of catching some infectious spiritual disease from them. Without some call from God in His providence, we might as well imitate Christ in working miracles as in associating with many sinners. Company may give us a relish for idle amusement and diversion that may be a snare to our souls, and do us spiritual hurt. Christ tells us if the salt have lost its savour it becomes useless; in like manner if the clergy frequent company instead of seasoning the company with the salt of grace, they lose the salt themselves. Instead of hearing the peculiar language of the Gospel, you hear the idle language of the company. In a word, the minister of the Gospel is to take heed that he do not go to the right hand or to the left. He may do hurt by levity; he may do hurt by needless austerities. He will therefore require a good deal of spiritual prudence. By complying with some people in some innocent things, he may gain them to religion:

by complying too much he may lose his own. And when his end is honest, the God whom he serves will direct him. Some good men go to one extreme, some to another. But their mistakes are over-ruled by God for their own good and that of others. The excessive sobriety of Timothy must have done good. In dissipated Ephesus the minister must take heed to the doctrine. It is not to be supposed, nor is it probable, that the Apostle suspected Timothy of any false opinions. But even Timothy stands in need of caution and advice. The Apostle here seems to have some particular advice in view respecting doctrine. The great doctrine he has in view is the most ancient doctrine of Revelation and the glory and foundation of Christianity. And upon this depends every other wholesome doctrine needful for souls. Scripture is a revelation from God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The great doctrine of godliness which we have in the last verse of the preceding chapter is in these words :—"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." The incarnation is a doctrine of pure revelation. The light of nature and the sagacity of philosophers could not discover it to us. And the Man of God is to have this doctrine in sight in every doctrine he preaches, as the man at the helm has his eye upon the compass whatever way he steers his course. And as the minister has the great foundation in sight as his leading doctrine, he is to build upon it, and to take heed what he builds. All doctrines are not equally useful, as a man may even preach truth and not preach the Gospel. I remember a particular note I heard when a boy. The minister was lecturing upon Proverbs xxxi., about the duties of the good housewife. He said, "She took hold of the distaff and spindle, but," says he, "we have a better thing than the distaff, and that is the wheel." Though the observation is true, I cannot call it a very edifying truth. It was poor doctrine at best. I shall in a few words point out to you the kind of doctrine the Gospel minister is to preach and insist upon constantly—

- (1) The doctrine that humbles the sinner.
- (2) The doctrine that exalts Christ.
- (3) The doctrine that promotes holiness, and virtue, and therefore will feed souls.

(1) The doctrine that humbles the sinner. Two great truths are necessary to be inculcated upon the sinner in order to humble him and to bring him to the foot of the cross, and these are the deep corruption of human nature and the sins he has been guilty of either privately in the sight of God, or

publicly in the sight of the world. The depravity and deceitfulness of the heart are to be laid open, and all the dark labyrinths and lurking holes, where sin lies hid, the false reasonings, apologies and excuses by which he deceives himself, are to be examined and tried by the light of Scripture, and when the abominations of his heart and the guilt of his life are proven against him, this will be the means, by the influences of the blessed Spirit, of bringing down his proud and uncircumcised heart. And when the Spirit of God says, "Thou art the Man," the sinner will fall down and yield to the Great Conqueror in the day of His power.

(2) The doctrine that exalts Christ. The law is our school-master to bring us to Christ. He is the end of the law. The law shows us our sin, and when searching doctrines and truths that are terrifying are preached to sinners, the carnal heart will rise in enmity against them. Upon this the enemy strikes in and denies the truth, or if the doctrine brings conviction, he tells the sinner there is no salvation for such a wretch; he sees there is but a step between him and hell. It is now the minister's business to exalt the Saviour by telling the truth about Him, and nothing but the truth. He is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person. He is that glorious Person in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and therefore able to save to the very uttermost. He is able and willing to save, and this is clear from His eternal existence, the glory of His works, and the extent of His power. By showing Christ to the sinner he knows His name and will therefore trust in Him. The Apostles and apostolical men preached Christ, and if we preach anything else we lose our pains, for He is the Head Corner-stone.

(3) The doctrine that promotes holiness and virtue, and therefore will feed souls. The great end of the Gospel is to restore the image of God, and thus prepare the souls for heaven. But it must be observed that a man may give very good advice and yet not promote holiness or virtue. If a man desires a poor, benumbed, starving creature, without strength, to rise and work, it is a cruel piece of mockery. He must first feed and cure him with food and cordials. In like manner to tell dead sinners to perform the duties of holiness, to which they have neither strength or relish, is to lose our pains. They must taste some comfort by having at least some faith in the Saviour before they can work in His vineyard. The tree must be made good before it produces good fruit, and the man must have some spiritual strength before he can work and proceed on his spiritual journey. We must do every other thing in the strength of Christ, and this

strength is never refused to those who earnestly and honestly ask it. The way-faring men, though fools, will not err in the way of holiness, for they go from strength to strength till they appear perfect in Zion. After the Apostle had recommended to Timothy to take heed to his conduct, to his doctrine, he adds, "Continue in them." A very learned man supposes that this is an advice to Timothy to remain in Ephesus. Perhaps the Apostle saw by the spirit of discernment that Timothy might prefer some other corner of the vineyard to work in, and therefore gave him this hint. Whatever be in this, we may say in the present instance that providence seems to point out to Timothy where he ought to work. Jacob loved Rachel better than Leah, and yet Leah was the mother of six sons, and from one of them descended the Saviour of the world.

And though this is a rough, rugged parish, who knows but God is saying to His servant here, as He said to the Apostle in Acts xviii. 9, 10—"Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city." And Christ may have many souls in this very place. The minister is to ask heavenly direction, and wherever God calls let him follow. Jonah, no doubt, would choose rather to prophecy and preach in his own country in Palestine, but if the Prophet refuses to comply with the Divine will, the whale is prepared to receive him into her belly.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

On MALACHI iii. 16-17

Malachi iii., 16-17.—“Then they that feared the Lord spake one to another,” etc.

THAT religion is necessary to our happiness both here and hereafter is a truth which is generally acknowledged in words. The generality of mankind cannot be satisfied without some appearance or other of religion, but while the heart remains carnal and enslaved to sin they content themselves with as much of it as they think necessary, but if they are advised to enter into the spirit of it, they beg to be excused, for they do not wish to be righteous over much, and although a carnal professor may embrace a form of religion, he has a heart enmity to true Godliness wherever it appears, and in nothing does this enmity more clearly discover itself than in the senseless cavil which irreverent persons, whether professors or openly profane, raise against religious conference. Common-sense will tell us that it is natural for people to be often speaking of a person who has laid them under great and singular obligations. And, in fact, it has been customary with the people of God in all ages of the Church to be often speaking of their great Benefactor. The practice of those who have gone before them, and the grateful sensation of their own hearts will lay them under a sweet necessity of performing a duty so edifying and so pleasant as meeting in their Father's house and speaking of the things He has done for their souls, and seeking His precious face by prayer and supplication.

In speaking further from these words we shall endeavour, first, to give a characteristic of them who fear God—They speak often one to another. Second, the notice God takes of them and the reward He promises them. Third, the distinction He shall make at last between the righteous and the wicked, those who serve God and those who serve Him not.

First, the characteristic of those who fear God: they spoke often to one another. Notwithstanding the general corruption of manners which the Prophet complains of in this chapter, he observes that still God has a remnant, and that these humble,

pious believers met together from time to time, that they might confer on religious subjects to animate one another to their duty. They took every opportunity of appearing for God and speaking in His cause. It is not expressly said here where they met, but that they did meet and spoke to one another. And that their subject was religious conference is clear from the notice God takes of it, and the reward He promised them. For the Lord hearkened and heard it, so a book of remembrance was written before Him for them—"And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels."

Now, there are various subjects which naturally employ the thoughts and occasion the conference of pious persons when they meet together. Among others, the dark and mysterious steps of Divine providence has been a subject of conference to believers under the Old Testament dispensation, and also under the New Testament, and if so, it is certain that those who fear the Lord should not forget the assembling of themselves together to speak to one another, and to seek the direction of the presence of God by prayer and supplication.

First, the dark and mysterious steps of Divine providence is a subject which causes those who fear the Lord to speak often one to another. The providence of God is oftentimes a labyrinth to the deepest and wisest among the people of God. The Psalmist was like to stumble when he observes the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous; and he remained in that situation until he went to the sanctuary and there observed their end. The people of God who fear and love His Name may observe appearances in Providence for which they cannot account, but though they cannot explain them, they will endeavour to justify them. There were such dark appearances in the time of the Prophet Malachi, and the wicked availed themselves of them, as we learn in the verses before the text. There were bold, impious persons found among the Jews who spake stout words against God, and who also justified them in the 13th, 14th and 15th verses. These characters considered all the time and expense employed in His service lost to them. They attended His ordinances and boldly affirmed that they derived no profit from them. They presumptuously said (verse 14), "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances and walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?" And, further, in verse 15, these characters said—"And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered."

But the righteous spake in vindication of righteous and Divine providence. Clouds and darkness may surround Him;

nevertheless justice, judgment and mercy are the habitation of His throne. A serious Christian, having his mind and thoughts exercised by the appearance of providence in his day and place, may be greatly relieved and comforted, through the blessing of God, by hearing another speak or pray concerning those subjects which give exercise to his own mind, for as face answers to face in water, the experience of one who fears the Lord may answer to another. And the Lord takes notice of the pious words, and hears the prayers of those who fear His Name and seek His glory. He is graciously present when they meet to converse and pray together.

(2) Another subject of conference among those who fear the Lord is speaking of the work of God's Spirit upon their souls, and, indeed, this is the sum and substance of all spiritual conference, and this is what makes spiritual conference so irksome and disagreeable to the carnal heart. There is no name which enmity can think of but is bestowed upon this precious and delightful exercise. When the Spirit of God touched the soul He brings it into bondage. He first binds and then sets at liberty. He convinces of sin by the law, and then He gives comfort by the Gospel. The Spirit of God fastens a word upon the conscience. Before then the sinner was asleep; he now takes concern. He attends the means of grace; He hears for eternity. Formerly he came to church because it was customary; he now comes to get comfort. He always waits to hear if anything touched his own case. He naturally thinks at first that no other person is, or has been, in his condition. By frequenting the company of the Lord's people, whom he now looks upon in a different light from what he once considered them, he learns that others are in similar cases. And when numbers feel the same spiritual disease they would naturally speak of it, and this accounts for the origin of spiritual conference. To suppose that a person has the grace of God is saying, in other words, that he has a concern for his soul, and if he has taken a concern he will be solicitous for a cure. When he gets comfort by believing he will speak as they that fear the Lord will speak about spiritual concern whenever they meet. They would naturally set apart some particular times for this purpose. To say that they who fear God should not speak of what God had done for their souls is in fact to say that we should forget and be ungrateful to our Friend. The profane scoffer has got a short way of answering this by calling them enthusiasts and other hard names; but let the ungodly say what they please, they that fear the Lord will speak of what He has done for their souls. We cannot but speak of what we have heard and seen. If we were to suppose that a man of elegant taste was intro-

duced into a grand, well-furnished palace in company with many blind men. When the man of taste sees a beautiful piece of painting, he gazes with admiration, and praises the work in the strongest terms he can; and though the blind men should ridicule him, still he believes his own eyes. In like manner will the man who has tasted that God is gracious be reasoned out of his spiritual senses, because a person who prefers the favour and praise of a fellow-creature or the things that perish to his Heavenly Father's blessing. Will those who fear the Lord, we say, be reasoned out of their spiritual senses because those who, like Esau, sell their birthright of heaven and glory, speak ill of them and ridicule them? Are the persons who speak ill of those who meet for spiritual conference, are they very punctual in observing other spiritual duties? No, they are not. People who are conscious of their own hypocrisy and that their lives are not consistent with their profession, may show their enmity at what they do not understand. But let them once taste the bitterness of sin and the pleasure of holiness and they will understand the meaning of expressing that which now may appear nonsensical to them.

Those who fear the Lord find so much sweetness in the grace that has sanctified them, and find so much satisfaction in meditating and speaking of the Saviour that has bought them that they can bear some ridicule for His sake. They know and feel the unspeakable weight of these expressions, sin and grace, that they make it the business of their lives to avoid the one and procure the other. And from the abundance of the heart their mouth speaketh. They are often afraid they may come short of the grace of God. They therefore speak often to one another and comfort one another with the comforts wherewith themselves are comforted of God. Sometimes they hear what searches and humbles them, and this is only preparing them for other greater comforts.

(3) The great work of redemption is another subject.

(4) And another the answer of prayer.

Now, this leads to the second thing proposed, viz., the notice God takes of them; but meantime we delay speaking of this part of the subject until another opportunity occurs, and we conclude with a few words of application from what hath been said.

INFERENCES.

And, first, we may infer how valuable it is to meet together for the purpose of seeking the presence of God and to avert impending judgments. Ye who fear the Lord let me tell you, although the scoffer and the hypocrite and the formal pro-

fessor may despise it ever so much, God approves of it, and will highly honour at last those who stand up for His cause, and those who speak about Him and for Him. And ye who fear the Lord and who meet together to call upon the name of the Lord, and who confess Him before men, great shall be your reward at last. I may, therefore ask, Shall a profane laugh make you flinch from your duty and afraid to confess your sins, or to speak about God? Let the wicked laugh and ridicule and blaspheme, this shall not hinder you from making public humiliation for our sins, and from declaring also what the Lord has done for your souls; and when you hear that the wicked ridicule you for your religion, remember the cheering promises in the text—"They shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." AMEN.

2. The notice God taketh of them and the reward He promises. Profane scoffers or ungodly hypocrites may laugh at them. The Apostle mentions cruel mocking as one of the sufferings of the saints; but woe to them who laugh at those who meet together because they fear the Lord. They shall mourn and weep at last. We read in Scripture that withholding alms from the followers of Christ is taken as if it was done to Himself. And if so, what punishment is waiting those that laugh and mock His followers? It is, however, worth their while to bear this when they reflect upon the great recompense of reward that awaits them.

(1) He hears and observes their services. They may be afraid He takes no notice of them, but He does, for His ear is open to their cry. He does not neglect their work of faith and labour of love. When they pray He hears and will answer, and if He deals with them sometimes as if He took no notice of them it is only to try their faith and patience to discover to themselves and others the sincerity of their graces, and to renew hereafter their perseverance in well-doing. And though the language of their experience may sometimes be that the Lord hath forgotten, He assures to the contrary, for He tells us—

(2) That He has a book of remembrance for those who fear Him and think upon His Name. If the good action of Mordecai towards his king was recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the King of Persia, all the good actings of His people are mentioned in the book of remembrance of the King of Heaven. Mordecai might think that his good action toward the king was forgotten, but it was more illustriously rewarded afterwards. The good-will which they showed to the cause of God by their words and deeds shall be publicly acknowledged, and it shall be declared before men and angels,

that these are the persons whom the King of Glory delighteth to honour.

If King David takes notice that his tears are in God's bottle, there is not a tear they shed, a word they spoke in favour of virtue and religion, or an action which they performed for God, but is mentioned in His book, from the house which the godly rich man builds for the service of God to the cup of cold water which the poor gives to one of his followers. And not only are their good words and actions mentioned in the book of God, but the good-will of their hearts. When they think with delight upon His Name, that is mentioned, for it was said to David, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart to build." When they can do nothing, the will is put down for the deed in the book. The widow's mite is marked down in the book, as well as the rich man's talent. The benevolent sentiments of the poor, as well as the charitable actings of the great. And it will fill them with astonishment that several things which they did and said for God shall be found written in the book, which had escaped their own memories. And if any of them stand alone and suffer for God in their day and generation they shall find this before them, and the ridicule and persecution they suffered rewarded with a crown of righteousness.

(3) They shall be the Lord's in the day He reckons up His jewels. A blind world sets a greater value on the treasures and the friendships than upon God's precious jewels. They do not know their value, and therefore they do not esteem them. But however much they may be despised in the world, the Saviour will own them as His brethren and value them dearly as the price of His blood. He has engaged Himself to present them all faultless before the Throne.

Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in their Father's Kingdom, and the redeemed of the Lord shall sparkle like jewels in the Saviour's crown of glory.

(4) He will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him. After all that they said and did for the Lord, they cannot plead any merit. They appeal, therefore, to His mercy through a Saviour. Afraid of themselves in every view, they have recourse to the righteousness of Christ to screen and protect them from justice, and in Him they find acceptance. They had once their fears and their doubts, but He assures them He will own them for children and spare them as a man spareth a son that serveth him, and He will make a distinction at last between them and the wicked.

3. The distinction He shall make at last between the righteous and the wicked--Those that serve God and those

that serve Him not. It is believed among all nations that there is a future state of rewards and punishments. All people will allow that bad men will be punished, but they seem to think it is only such as they reckon immoral characters that are meant. But God takes particular notice of a certain class of wicked characters, viz., those that do not serve Him. Is it agreeable to reason or common sense or Scripture to suppose that God will put no difference between those who worship Him and those who never bow their knee in their family? Scoffers will have the impudence to say that they hope to go to Heaven as soon as those who make great works about religion, but if people get to Heaven without serving God, revelation is deceiving us. What excuse can people frame for not worshipping God? In the great day of accounts all men must appear; and will the man who has been ridiculing religious persons and never bowed his knee to God be welcomed with those joyful sounds, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy God."

Can we suppose that God will solemnly pronounce a lie before men and angels? Can we seriously believe that those who live to themselves, who pamper their bodies, who pass their time in merriment and whim, who drown thought and stifle conviction, shall be upon the same footing at last with those who live soberly, righteously, and godly? When the Judge of all shall appear in flaming fire to take vengeance upon sinners, those who are indifferent about the worship of God cannot escape. You will then see to your cost that religion is a great reality; the wicked shall be turned into hell, and the nations who forgot God. Nor will a mere form of religion protect people at last, for this is only a mockery of God. You will find that the religion which you could reconcile with a carnal, flesh-pleasing life was no religion at all. Do not think either that because you are busy in the world that this will excuse you for being prayerless in secret or in your family. Neither will it mitigate your pain or your punishment at last that other people are as vain, as foolish, as worldly, as irreligious as yourselves. How can you escape the judgment of God who can spend many hours in sloth and idleness, in play and diversion, and yet cannot give one half-hour to the service of God? Will you dare to say that you hope to go to heaven as soon as those who are now most devoted to God, and whom you shall then see at the right hand of God? Will you dare tell Him at His Judgment Seat that He has done you any injury by excluding you from that heaven which you did not think it worth your while to pray for, or to struggle about?

Scripture assures us, my friends, that God will make a difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the profane scoffer and the true worshipper of God. Such as do not take warning in time shall then hear these awful words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," You ridiculed religion, you despised the true followers of Christ, you refused wholesome doctrine, you hated reproof, you shut your eyes upon the light, and you did not worship God. At last then shall ye return and discern. On the other hand, God will address His people—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Well done ye good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." However much religion and religious persons may be despised in the world, the day is coming when religion shall be found to be the true ornament of human nature. It shall then be seen who is the greatest fool—the person who did all he could to please God, or the sinner who did not worship Him, and who sold heaven for one morsel of the pleasures of time and sense. We shall then see who shall be the most valuable characters of the two—the man who was singing and laughing over his glass and spending his time in merriment and mirth, or the man who was weeping over his sins, the man that spent his precious time in following lying vanities, or the man that was wrestling at a throne of grace.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON GALATIANS v. 24*

Galatians v. 24—"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

SELF-DENIAL is one of the great doctrines of Christianity. We are called upon to crucify our lusts and our idols, and this is founded in the truest reason. God requires of God's people only what is for their own spiritual good. By our fall in Adam our passions refuse to obey reason and conscience, and our will is often repugnant to the will of God. We are to do all things for the glory of God, and if this be the case we must certainly deny the will of the flesh, give up ourselves to the guidance of the spirit, follow the direction of the Word and bring every thought in obedience to Christ; and this is not easy.

I. Manner in which we are to crucify the flesh—the affections and lusts.

II. Motives to crucify the flesh.

III. Give some marks of those who crucify the flesh.

IV. Improvement.

I. Manner in which we are to crucify the flesh — the affections and lusts. This is the character of the people of God. They are called to spiritual war.

(1) They do this by strength derived from the Saviour. They look to the Saviour's death—hence hate sin. Death a slow one. Nailing to cross. Sin dies of pain and hunger.

(2) By the love of Christ and setting the affections on heavenly objects.

(3) By fasting, watching, and prayer.

(4) By diligently waiting the means of grace.

(5) By attentively observing the ways of providence.

II. Motives to crucify the flesh.

(1) Misery and danger of a sinful course here and hereafter.

(2) Example of all the people of God; this is the King's highroad to the Kingdom; we are to follow the footsteps of the flock.

[* Only the outlines of this and the following lecture appear among Rev. Mr Lachlan's papers, and they are reproduced here as samples of the methods he adopted in building up an address.—Ed.]

(3) The disgrace there is in sinful indulgences and the hurt done thereby to the good cause—cause of triumph to the wicked.

(4) Advantages of Mortification. 1. The gratulations of conscience—great peace of such as love God's law. 2. The joys in the way of religion. 3. The happy influence of good example to others—this promotes God's glory. 4. The comforts of a well-spent life at death. 5. Everlasting happiness.

III. Marks of those who crucify the flesh, the affections and lusts.

(1) They are such as got a view of the evil and malignant nature of sin.

(2) They know by experience the empty and unsubstantial nature of the pleasures of sin and sense.

(3) The love of Christ and the joys of religion make them indifferent to other pleasures (no instance in Scripture of any of the saints being reckoned covetous).

(4) They are made to give up their idols to the Saviour without reserve; they desire to be examined and to know the worst of themselves. They are afraid of the predominant passions, and have a constant eye upon that (Colos. iii. 5).

(5) They join their own endeavours to their prayers and avoid all occasions of sin.

(6) Their relapses into sin have taught them humility, and therefore they entirely depend upon the Saviour for the victory over their fleshly lusts. Lastly, they are such as have resolved to make no peace with sin, and have resolutely determined to continue the war till such time as the last remains of it are destroyed in their souls, till they are made perfect in grace and made fit for glory.

IV. Improvement.

(1) By this we learn the character of the true followers of Christ. They do not indulge their fleshly lusts. Those, therefore, who pamper the body and give the will to the flesh cannot be the children of the covenant. Let us not therefore deceive ourselves with a mere profession without a life of holiness. It is not said in Scripture that they that are Christ's have taken the sacrament and come to Church, but that they crucify the flesh.

(2) If we would crucify the flesh we must ask ourselves — Is this I am doing not merely a lawful thing, but is it agreeable to the will of God? Is it for His glory, and for my everlasting good?

(3) Those that crucify the flesh must avoid small things in the eye of the world. A woman who has a jealous husband

cannot use innocent liberties with a man who was making love to her formerly. God is called a jealous God. Dinah paid a visit; she might think this innocent. The visit was fatal. Going to company may be thought innocent. A man may get drunk and afterwards do worse.

(4) If we crucify the flesh we must not only avoid the sin, but also the temptation—drink, women.

(5) If we would crucify the flesh, we must guard the heart and watch over the outward senses.

(6) We must get purer pleasures than the pleasures of sense.

(7) Lastly—If we would crucify the flesh we must earnestly pray for grace from the Saviour to conquer the flesh. It is by the Spirit we are to mortify the deeds of the body. Our own endeavours are necessary, and should be used, but without the Saviour we can do nothing. We must depend upon Him. To conquer sin we are—

1. To pray earnestly.
2. To go to the foot of the cross.
3. To watch constantly.
4. To wait continually.

Though the war be long and painful, the victory will be glorious and the reward great. AMEN.

LECTURE

ON REVELATION iii. 5

Rev. iii. 5—"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment," etc.

WE were all of us early dedicated to God in baptism, and promised then to fight under Christ's banner against the world, the flesh and the devil. This is the design of all true religion and the tendency of all the promises of the Gospel is that we might be encouraged to persevere to the end. The Christian life is a warfare against a combination of powerful enemies, through which we must cut our way to the Kingdom of Heaven. We must continually watch, fight and conquer. We are here in a state of probation for another life, and therefore we have continually some particular grace or virtue to cherish, some sin or lust to subdue, and to invigorate our holy endeavours. We have assurance of full and perfect felicity in the life to come. As we are ready to faint and sink in our minds, the promises of reward are here and there scattered in the Word of God, and there is no duty we are called to perform but there is a correspondent promise annexed to it. Thus we are told in the words of the text—"He that overcometh," etc. That is, he that perseveres to the end shall be saved. "He that by faith in Christ without fainting because of tribulations gets the victory over the world," etc., shall be rewarded in heaven. Thus we are to understand the words in the Book of Revelation.

1. Explain the duty enjoined.
2. The promises annexed.
3. Make some improvements.

I. The duty enjoined is to overcome. The word is "Tokini," that is, overcoming—he that is in an overcoming posture; he that is upon the defence. If we begin once in earnest we shall surely persevere. He that begins the good work (Phil. i. 16). We are to overcome the enemies of God's glory standing between us and heaven—(1) the devil, (2) the world, (3) the flesh.

(1) The devil. His wiles are the deft baits he offers to all mankind, from the richest to the lowest, according to

their outward circumstances and the inward frame of their minds. In outward circumstances, inciting the rich to pride, cruelty, ambition, and grinding the faces of the poor. Inciting the poor to envy, discontent at Providence, theft, unjust dealing, and perjury. Inwardly inciting minds to foolish wantonness; the heavy to melancholy; those in a state of grace to doubt the reality of it; those long praying without an answer to think that God has forgotten them; those in the use of means to depend upon them; those without grace that they may repent hereafter; after sacraments, wishing to bring the communicants into some great sin; to wound the conscience and open the mouths of the ungodly. This is illustrated in a story from one of the Fathers in a strong simile. All bad thoughts are from him, as good ones from the Holy Spirit. Our duty is to resist (1st Peter v. 8, 9). Faith in the Word of God is our shield by which we quench the fiery darts of the devil. The Word is the weapon our Lord did make use of against him.

(2) The world. It furnishes temptations enough to draw our hearts from God and our duty. We must not set our hearts too much upon the things of this world, otherwise we have not in us the love of the Father. If our hearts are heavenwards the things of the world, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life are not worthy of our regard. All these must be conquered by faith in Christ. Faith is the cause of our victory—

(1) By it we cleave to Christ in contempt of and in opposition to the things of the world. (2) Faith works by love to God, and draws our love from the world. (3) It sanctifies the hearts from the lusts to which the world sways our souls. (4) It derives strength from Christ to conquer the frowns and flatterers of the world. (5) It obtains by promise the Spirit, who is greater than he that is in the world. (6) It presents to the eye of the soul an invisible world.

(3) The flesh, our inbred corruption. It is this which gives the world and the devil an advantage over us. We are to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, to flee from all occasion of sin, and that we may do this, let us consider (1) such places of Scripture as threaten an indulgence in fleshly lusts, as in Romans viii. 13—"For if ye live after the flesh ye die." Gal. vi. 7—"For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, for he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," 1st Cor. vi. 9, 10, etc.

2. Let us consider the example of saints and heroes, and of Jesus Christ Himself (Rev. xiv. 4).

3. View the sacrament of Christ.

II. The promises annexed. Divers are the promises to such as overcome (Rev. ii. 11, 17, 26 ; Rev. iii. 5, 12, 21), but I shall confine myself to those in the text.

1. He shall be clothed in white, that is in the white robes of justification, adoption, and sanctification here, and in the robes of honour and glory in the life to come. The purity of grace shall be rewarded with the purity of glory. White is an emblem of innocence. Such as keep their garments unspotted shall walk with Christ in white as being worthy.

2. Their names shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life. The Book of Life is God's eternal purpose of saving His people. Can any be blotted out of the Book of Life? No. 1st, on account of the unchangeableness of God's decrees; 2nd, the eternity of the Covenant of Grace; 3rd, the connection of the graces of the Holy Spirit; but hypocrites are blotted out when it is discovered to themselves and others what they are when the mask is taken off their faces.

Lastly—He will produce this Book of Life before angels and men. He will confess their names before all the world, and will lead them triumphantly to heaven, and will say to His Father—"Behold me and the children whom Thou hast given me." Then shall they enter into joy unspeakable and full of glory. The whole Church of God shall join in songs of praise, and the highest heaven shall ring with hallelujahs for evermore—Rev. v. 9 to the end.

Having now endeavoured to explain the doctrinal heads, I shall make some improvement.

1. It is our duty to secure an interest in the Book of Life. If it be enquired whether we can know that our names are written in this book, I answer that we can (Luke x. 25).

2. It is the nature of grace not only to give good things, but also the sense and feeling of them.

3. The faithful may know that they are the sons of God (Rom. viii. 16). They may know they have eternal life (1st John v. 13), and whence is eternal life but from the Book of Life.

(1) They may know that they have faith from being desired to examine themselves about it (2nd Cor. xiii. 5 ; 1st John ii. 5). God knows them that are His, and let every one that name the name of Christ depart from iniquity, and thus he may know the love of God towards him.

(2) For this purpose let us often consult this Book of Life, and this we may do in the Word and in our conscience. And

let us not deceive ourselves by our false professions (Nehemiah vii. 64), but by the practice of holiness and good works; let us make our calling and election sure, as none are admitted without the necessary qualifications. If we love God and keep His commandments we may believe that God loved us with an everlasting love. Let us love Christ.

May God bless His Word. Amen.

LECTURE

On ISAIAH xl. 1

Isa. xl. 1—"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God," etc.

THE Gospel properly so called is a doctrine of comfort to poor sinners. Sin and wickedness naturally bring gloom and misery upon the human mind, notwithstanding the false sources of comfort to which guilty criminals have recourse to bring ease and comfort to their troubled thoughts. It is not in music and feasting, in the social glass or the loud laugh, that true joy is to be found. Though the guilty monarch of Babylon drank wine in golden vessels, the handwriting upon the wall made his joints to tremble and his knees to beat the one against the other. The voice of conscience and of Scripture will follow the sinner as it did the first bold transgressor, crying, "Adam, where art thou?" And nothing can give him solid satisfaction till he hears the joyful sound of the Gospel as he did, and when this happens, peace and joy is whispered into the guilty conscience.

We are commanded to preach the Gospel, and the Gospel is a doctrine of comfort to all ranks of men. From these words we shall see the following truths:—

1. That God commands to comfort His people, and why He does so.
2. What things in the Gospel are a fountain of comfort to sinners.

1. We are commanded to preach comfort, because many of the Lord's people stand greatly in need of comfort. We do not know the sins of one another, and it is an unspeakable mercy that God hath hid this from us. Many that afterwards proved good men have in the heat of youthful blood committed actions that have kept them humble all their days, and though God forgave them upon their repentance, yet as they have not always the comfort and the assurance of God's grace, guilt will often make them afraid. God pardoned King David, but from what we read of his bitter complaint in the Book of Psalms it appears that he often had his fears,

although the Prophet assured him that the Lord had put away his sin, that he would not die; and when the memory of past transactions will haunt the guilty conscience like a ghost, how refreshing to his soul are the glad tidings of the Gospel. How will it cheer the drooping thoughts to hear such Scriptures as these :—"Though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," and such were some of you. And that well-known text—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Some sinners require to hear comfort as regular as the body requires food. Few, comparatively speaking, have such measure of assurance and joy at all times as excludes doubting and unbelief. This is their mercy, for even the great apostle of the Gentiles stood in need of a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. Several Christians are like the brethren of Joseph, though he gave them all the assurances which their misgiving hearts could ask of his kindness and affection, yet we find that they were afraid seventeen years thereafter that he would punish them. And Joseph gave them fresh assurances of his reconciliation and brotherly love. And do not our unbelieving hearts harbour unworthy and ungenerous thoughts of our great Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet His words assure us in the strongest terms of His willingness to pity and pardon the greatest sinners ?

2. Because comfort is what will strengthen them to yield hearty obedience to the law. Our Lord assures us that to love the Lord with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves, is the substance of the law and the Prophets.

When we love God, universal obedience will become an easy and delightful duty. And what doctrine will produce this obedience ? Not surely the terrors of the law. These may produce slavish fear, but not to obedience. The terrors of the law have their use, and some tempers are so obstinate and perverse that they require them. Were it not for the terrors of the world to come and the fear of human law this world would become a scene of misery. But whatever outward appearances this may effect, they never did and never will produce real holiness and virtue. This will proceed from another source. The terror of Mount Sinai made the stubborn Israelites to promise obedience, but when the terrors cease, like Pharaoh, they return to their old sins, and set up the worship of the golden calf; but when Ephraim and the prodigal are pardoned, the language of the one—"What have I any more to do with idols ?" and the other is so far humbled that he is willing to be one of his father's hired servants. If a thief were to witness an execution, the sight would perhaps make him honest for a few days. Notwithstanding, the wild

beast within is not tamed; he is still a thief in his heart. But if we were to suppose that God in a moment touched his heart and gave him a sight of the Man that was crucified between the two thieves, that sight would make him an honest man all at once. That thief is not now restrained by the fear of hell or of the gallows. A more generous principle sways his soul. The love of God, stronger than a thousand cords, draws all the power of his soul to yield prompt obedience to the law. The King of Saints is served by a royal army of volunteers, for His people are made willing in a day of His power.

3. Because God has pleasure in the prosperity of His servants and rejoices in their spiritual happiness. When He created the world we are told that He pronounced all things that He did to be good. And the Psalmist informs us that the Lord rejoiced in all His works (Psalm civ. 31), and as He rejoiced in the creation at first, we are likewise informed that He rejoices in the return of lost sinners, who are His spiritual and new creation. And so He rejoices at their conversion. He has pleasure in their comfort. The language of Scripture is, "Rejoice evermore," etc. (1st Thess. v. 16).

That God rejoices in cheerfulness and spiritual joy is clear from the history of the Prophet Elisha. When the king consulted him it would appear that the good man had a heavy heart. He called for a musical instrument, not to banish serious thoughts, but to cheer his heart. When the minstrel played the hand of God came upon him. Gloomy thoughts banish him for a time (2nd Kings iii. 15); but cheerful and refreshing thoughts make room for his holy motions and influences upon the soul. The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts viii. 39), and the primitive Christians did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. When the angel announced the birth of the Saviour he did it with songs of joy, and so ought we also. If we have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, this should give us strong consolation. God not only rejoices in the melody of heaven, but He rejoices also in the songs of His saints in the house of their pilgrimage. It is true that God's people may sometimes have mourning hearts and manifold and many temptations, but even in such cases they ought, with the Royal Psalmist, to pray for the joy of his salvation and uphold with them his free spirit. The Apostle Peter had a very heavy heart after his great sin, but our Lord sent him a particular message by name. Scarlet sinners and foul sinners are particularly mentioned as the chief of sinners, to whom the news of salvation is sent, and who ought to welcome the joyful sound.

4. Because God Himself was to assume the human nature, and this was to have a feeling of their spiritual distresses. God Almighty, upon the foresight of our sin and misery, resolved upon our recovery by uniting the human nature to Himself. He foresaw likewise what He was to suffer as Man to effect our recovery.

Though His human nature was to be holy, harmless and undefiled, and subsequently free from guilt, yet it was to be subject to punishment. From what He was to suffer He was to have a feeling for what sinners endured from guilt. He feels as our High Priest for every sinner that applies to Him for pardon. And He commands to preach redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. The shedding of His blood was the last and the crowning act of His sufferings, and what would give the greatest happiness to His people. He felt misery for them during His life, but He felt the greatest misery and agony at His crucifixion, and He wished His people to fix their eyes upon this sight as the only source of their greatest happiness and joy.

1. Although they meet with trials and difficulties and troubles, yet amidst them all they have recourse to their sympathising High Priest, to trust in His grace, to lean on His strength, to apply for direction.

2. What things in the Gospel are a fountain of comfort to poor souls. Though the sufferings of Christ, as we just now heard, is the great source of joy, yet there are many other truths in connection with this great truth and flowing from it that are peculiarly adapted to give joy to the heart.

(1) The Gospel is a source of comfort to us, as it points out to us a great Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him.

God has provided for us a noble remedy. He sent His Son into the world; His name is Jesus, a Saviour who was to save His people from their sins. It is not said here that He saves them from hell, though this is true also; but that He saves them from their sins. This is not the salvation that sinners wish for, but merely freedom from punishment, though they continue in sin, prayerless and worldly-minded. When sinners hear the nature of the Gospel they reject the glad tidings. Tell a covetous worldling that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that He will save him from the love of the world if he applies to Him. He does not relish the doctrine and does not give him comfort. Tell an unclean person or a drunkard that Christ will save them from their lusts; they do not reckon themselves obliged to Him for this; they would like Him better to allow them continue as they

are, but to save them from hell, and to bring or receive them into heaven, with all their sins about them. Alas ! vain are their hopes when they think that God would do an impossible thing. He cannot tell a lie or reconcile contrarities. He hates sin and loves holiness. He has given strong proof already that He cannot endure sinners. Rebel angels, creatures that were higher in the scale of being than we are, are reserved in chains of darkness for their rebellion. But though we should be great sinners and our rebellion partake of the nature of devils themselves, yet if we lay down the arms of rebellion and turn to God we need not despair. Jesus Christ dies for sinners and can save to the very uttermost all that come to God through Him. He can change our hearts if we apply to Him. He can quicken them if we feel them dead, and cleanse them if they are foul; and He promises to do so. And if we are great sinners and have no hope, He offers us doctrine that begets hope in the most graceless and profligate of mankind.

Great sinners have often great fears, which make them run to great care and business, like Cain, or to worldly diversions, like the Babylonian King, in order to drown thought and kill time. Instead of this they ought to fix their thoughts upon the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ.

If we are great sinners, here is a great Saviour, able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. Though our prayers are worth nothing in themselves, His intercession is powerful. (1) Though we may deserve a denial, yet He has never refused. (2) Though we have many accusers, He soon silences them all by a single expression. The Lord rebuke thee, Satan, and he asks a question—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Though Satan is the father of lies, though with a bad design he often tells the truth, he knows that the people of God have committed such and such sins. This with truth cannot be denied, and God knows the sins they have committed. But they have fled for refuge to Christ, and the Apostle asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that dies, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." These are grand, cheerful and animating truths.

(2) It contains precious promises and advices that suit every case and applies to every condition we can be in. There is an endless variety of cases among the people of God. No man can know them except their great High Priest, who was tempted and tried in all cases like His brethren, yet without sin. And as they are variously exercised, their spiritual

enemy has various snares to catch them in his net. Some great sinners he tempted to cast away their hopes and to say with Zion, "The Lord hath forsaken me," but what says the Lord Himself?—"Can a woman forget her suckling," etc. "I have graven thee upon the palm of mine hand. Wait upon the Lord and be of good courage. Yet a little time and He that cometh will come and will not tarry." He tempted others to commit great sins to which they are prone by habit or constitution, but the language of Scripture is, "What shall it profit a man?" etc. If he is tempted to villainy or dishonesty or uncleanness, the language of Scripture is, "Can I do this great wickedness and sin against God? He that perseveres unto the end shall be saved. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." There are many of the Lord's people that are poor. His command and advice to such is to be content with such as they have, that He will never leave nor forsake them. Christ and His Apostles, Elijah and John the Baptist, were poor. Some of the greatest saints were in straitened circumstances, and they were called to the post of honour that their reward might be still greater in the world to come. The world in general is dazzled with the riches that perish and with the exploits of conquerors, but the heroes in the sight of God are those who conquer their lusts and resign themselves to the will of God. Like pearls and precious stones in the rock, like gold in the ore, they are often hid from the world but known to God, and His Word reaches them whatever case they may be in. Light is sown for the righteous, and it will arise and visit them according to their various needs. And there is something suitable to their case in several parts of the Scripture (Gen. xviii. 14; Jer. xxxii. 27; Isa. xliii. 19).

It points out to us the prospects, the bright prospects, of a happy immortality beyond the grave, of the road that leads to it, and of the qualifications necessary for that state of bliss. We are expressly told that Christ has brought light and immortality unto life by the Gospel (2nd Tim. i. 10). He has given some intimation of it to His people under the Old Testament dispensation. Moses assures us that the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent, that God translated Enoch, and that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a proof that the doctrine of immortality of the soul was then believed. Job and King David had no doubt of their everlasting happiness.

Poor heathens had some hopes but great uncertainty about the doctrine, but our Lord has given ocular demonstration of this great matter and put it beyond a doubt. He rose from the dead, and this was attested by many instances. His

ascension likewise was seen by several witnesses, and they had proof that He was upon the right hand of God by His sending the Holy Ghost upon them at the Day of Pentecost. He promised this to them before He ascended to heaven, and they had the strongest and most undeniable proof that He was now in that very place.

The Holy Ghost taught them all the languages that were spoken in all the countries through which they were to pass in preaching the Gospel, and He did this instantaneously. Now, the very doctrine which our Lord preached when upon earth was a holy doctrine, and Himself set them an example.

He taught them the necessity of holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. Holiness is the beginning of heaven in the soul. It is a qualification which assures the heirs possessing it of eternal happiness whenever it is made perfect in his soul. As it advances it shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

What is incumbent upon us in order to prepare ourselves for the comfort which the Gospel offers us? We can easily see that comfort cannot properly be preached to all indiscriminately. The prevalence of lust in some and of prejudice and unbelief in others hinder the comfort of God from flowing into their souls. The Scripture, then, has separate doctrines for both these classes of hearers. To the former it preaches terror and points out their danger. They cannot apply comfort till they forsake their sins. They are required to break off evil habits, and they cannot deny but they have this in their power. A stroke of Almighty power is necessary to produce a saving change. A stroke of Almighty power was necessary to make a passage through the Red Sea. And yet we read that the children of Israel were commanded to go forward. Their going forward could not assist the powerful arm of Jehovah, but it argued their obedience to a Divine command. And God always commands the wicked man to forsake his ways. Until he does so any comfort he speaks to himself is delusion.

Again, prejudice and unbelief may preclude comfort. It does so in the people of God, and it may do so in those who are afraid that they are not so. After examining themselves they are to part with their achans and idols, and come just as they are to the Saviour and humble themselves. From Him they are to expect the new heart, and not from their own exertions and endeavours. And by waiting perseveringly upon God and constantly looking up and relying on the Saviour for help, may look for an answer in His good time. The widow got redress even from the unjust judge, and the poor

man got the loaves from his friend by his importunity. Let us therefore wait upon the Lord.

Again, some of the people of God may have extraordinary troubles that put their faith and constancy to the greatest trial. We see from Scripture that extraordinary troubles were sometimes followed by extraordinary enlargements and answer to prayers to the people of God, and that they were in this way comforted, like the Israelites, like Job, Abraham, David and the apostles. Job met with extraordinary afflictions in his person and family. His reverse of fortune was wonderful. From affluent circumstances he fell into direst poverty, sickness and contraries. From the lowest point he came at last to the highest respect and happiness.

The Israelites at the Red Sea were in great distress a little before the great deliverance wrought for them. King David was reduced so low that the people spoke of stoning him a short space before he received the news that paved the way for him to the throne; and the disciples were in great distress when they saw their Lord and Master laid in the silent tomb; but in a few days they saw Him again with transports of joy after His resurrection. And this method of dealing with His people is the effect of perfect and consummate wisdom. They are humbled first, so that their temporal and spiritual prosperity may not exalt them above measure.

But, lastly, there is another ground of comfort which the Word of God holds forth to us, and which we ought to improve, that is that all the troubles of the people of God shall work for their good, both temporal and spiritual. We are desired to mark the perfect man, and to behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. Seeing, then, that all the troubles of the people of God terminate in their eternal happiness, we ought not to be so much concerned for the removal of our troubles as that they will sanctify our souls.

May God bless His Word. AMEN.

MISCELLANEA

“Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock”

REMARKABLE STORY TOLD AT ABERDEEN

(CONTRIBUTED BY A PERSON STILL LIVING)

THE following story regarding a visit to Aberdeen of the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie was told to me many years ago by the late Mr Colin Stewart, Provost of Dingwall, it having been handed down to him from family to family :—

During the height of his fame as a Highland evangelist, the Rev. Mr Lachlan Mackenzie was asked to visit Aberdeen, and to preach in the Old Parish Church of St Nicholas. At the evening service the church was filled to its utmost capacity, and there was eager anticipation on the part of the worshippers. When Mr Mackenzie ascended the pulpit a titter went through the congregation when they beheld a man wearing a rough homespun suit, with long shaggy hair (so unlike the usual clergyman of that time). But the moment he gave out his opening Psalm, a solemn stillness seemed to pervade the audience, and his opening prayer solemnised the people. The “reading” was the third chapter of Revelation, and he chose as his text the 20th verse—“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Standing erect in the pulpit, Mr Mackenzie commenced his sermon thus :—

Once upon a time there lived in our Highlands a great Duke. He had a large estate, was very rich, and had everything in this world to make a man happy, if that were possible, so far as worldly gear was concerned. He was a widower, had an only child, a beautiful girl, who had a very sweet disposition, was very kind to the poor, and was beloved by all around. When she was 20 years of age her father said to her—“My daughter, next year you will become of age, and I intend to ask to the castle here, for a week’s festivities, all the young nobles of the land. I expect that many of them will be asking your hand in marriage, and I beg of you to see that you make a good choice, for your happiness in your after-life will depend on the choice you make. I might also say that, in case anything should happen to me, I have made my will,

and everything I possess in this world at my death will belong to you."

The time soon came for the celebration of her 21st birthday, and while her Ladyship was in her room with her maid dressing, in preparation for the reception of the guests, a loud knocking was heard at the back door of the court. One of the men-servants, on going out to see who was making such a noise, found a beggar man on crutches. The man-servant ordered him to go away. "Don't trouble her Ladyship to-day," he said, "she is very busy, and a great many guests are coming shortly to the castle."

But the beggar answered that he would not go away until he saw her Ladyship.

Thereupon the door was slammed in the beggar's face; but he took up one of his crutches and laid on to the door, making such a noise that it brought back the servant, who threatened to put the dogs on to him if he did not go away. To this the beggar only replied that the dogs would not frighten him, and he would not go away until he had seen her Ladyship.

To try and frighten him the servant went to the kennels, and at once the dogs set up such a terrible howling that the noise reached her Ladyship's ears; and she sent her maid to find out the meaning of it all. The maid returned with the information that it was a poor, lame beggar man who wanted to see her Ladyship, and he would not go away until he saw her. "Very well," replied her Ladyship, "I will be down presently. Tell him to wait till I come."

Shortly afterwards her Ladyship went down (followed by a retinue of servants, in case any harm might come to her). Seeing the beggar, she asked him kindly—"Well, my good man, what do you want?" He bowed, and then said—"I have come to ask your hand in marriage to-day." Her Ladyship looked at him steadfastly for a moment, then stepping forward, said—"Very well. Here it is."

The beggar approached, bowed low, and taking her hand in his, kissed it, adding—"And on what day will you marry me?" To which her Ladyship replied, "This day twelve months hence."

On hearing her reply, the beggar gathered up his crutches and hobbled away, greatly to the relief and delight of the servants standing around, who thought she had got rid of the beggar very quickly and easily."

During the week of the festivities many of the young nobles asked her hand in marriage, but all of them got the same reply—"I am betrothed already."

Many began asking who the "lucky fellow" was, but no one could tell. Then the servants, overhearing the conversations amongst the guests, began to wonder among themselves if it were really true that she had given away her hand in marriage to the beggar.

At last it came to her father's ears that she had been asked by many, and all had been given the same refusal, and that she had given her hand in marriage to a beggar, with a promise that it should take place in a year's time. Her father was heart-broken.

"Is it true, my daughter, that you have given your hand in marriage to a poor beggar man?"

"Yes, father, it is quite true, and it will be alright."

The week of festivities ended rather abruptly, everyone being greatly disappointed at the news of her betrothal to the beggar.

During the year her father time after time called her to his side, saying—"Oh, my daughter! oh, my daughter! comfort me. Tell me it is all a mistake." But her answer was always the same—"It is quite true, father, and it will be alright."

At length the year passed by. No preparation was made for the marriage, and on the day appointed her father sent for her, and said—"You see, my daughter, there is no one coming."

"Oh, but he will come!" she replied.

One o'clock chimed, yet no appearance of anyone coming. About two o'clock in the afternoon, however, a great noise was heard coming over the hill towards the castle. Everyone in the house rushed to the windows, and what they beheld was a wonderful procession of pipers, drummers and horsemen, in large numbers. Up to the front door of the castle came a guard of prancing horsemen, who lined both sides of the avenue. Wheeling around, they drew up, each horse facing the other and forming a guard of honour.

Then, last of all, came a beautiful prancing steed, with a noble rider on its back. On reaching the steps leading to the doorway of the castle, this rider threw himself from the saddle, ran up the steps, and embraced his beloved.

Who was he? The King's son!

That morning twelve months before he had disguised himself as a poor beggar, and came in that way lest he should be too late. Recognising his eyes, she knew who he was, and kept his secret. So all were glad at the end.

Mr Mackenzie then repeated his text—"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Who is standing at your heart's door to-night, my people? Who is standing at your heart's door and knocking to-night, my people? A beggar! One of Whom it was said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." A Man whose face was more marred than that of any man. A beggar knocking at your heart's door to-night, seeking admission. If you will give Him your hand in marriage, He will make you a Queen, for He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

At the close of the sermon the congregation were so moved that it was said there were six hundred seeking souls in the church that night.

M. C.

THE HAPPY MAN

By The Rev. LACHLAN MACKENZIE

THE happy man was born in the city of Regeneration in the parish of Repentance unto life. He was educated at the school of Obedience. He has a large estate in the county of Christian Contentment, and many times does jobs of self-denial, wears the garment of Humility, and has another suit to put on when he goes to Court, called the Robe of Christ's Righteousness. He often walks in the valley of Self-Abasement, and sometimes climbs the mountains of Heavenly-mindedness. He breakfasts every morning on Spiritual Prayer, and sups every evening on the same. He has meat to eat that the world knows not of, and his drink is the sincere milk of the Word of God. Thus happy he lives, and happy he dies. Happy is he who has Gospel submission in his will, due order in his affections, sound peace in his conscience, real Divinity in his breast; the Redeemer's yoke on his neck, a vain world under his feet, and a crown of glory over his head. Happy is the life of that man who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, works abundantly, lives holy, dies daily, watches his heart, guides his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for glory. He is necessitated to take the world on his way to heaven, but he walks through it as fast as he can, and all his business by the way is to make himself and others happy. Take him all in all, in two words, he is a Man and a Christian.

“MUCKLE KATE”

OR

SOVEREIGN GRACE “MUCH MORE ABOUNDING”

AMONG the Highlanders of Ross the name of Mr Lachlan Mackenzie, the godly minister of Lochcarron, was very fragrant, and even now there may be some to whom “the great Mr Lachlan” is a pleasant name.

The following story will illustrate the sovereignty and power of grace, and is given on the authority of a late eminent godly minister in Ross, who was an eye witness of the principal scenes herein stated.

Not far from the manse of Lochcarron a wicked old sinner lived, who was supposed to have been guilty of every forbidden crime in the Law of God except murder. As she had very masculine dimensions she was known as “Muckle Kate.” “An ill-looking woman without any beauty in the sight of God and man,” Mr Lachlan used to say of her. The efforts of her minister could not succeed to get from her even occasional attendance at the House of God; entreaties, visits, appeals to her conscience many and strong were made by him, but all in vain; nothing could reach the heart which seemed certainly to have reached the point “past feeling.” Her minister adopted a plan to reach her conscience, which certainly was very strange; some would, perhaps, say it was unwarrantable, but God owned it, and as He is a Sovereign, doing just as He will, we shall not say “it was unwarrantable.” It was customary among the Highlanders, during the last century, to meet at night-fall in each others houses, and spend the long evenings in singing Gaelic melodies. The women brought with them their distaffs and spindles, while the men mended their brogues or weaved baskets and creels. This was called “going on kailie.”*

Kate devoted herself to this practice with eagerness. Her minister knowing this, and having a turn for rhyming,

* I give the word as an English reader would pronounce it. The true spelling, however, is “ceillidh.”

composed a Gaelic song in which all Kate's known sins were enumerated and lashed with all the severity of which the composer was capable. This song Mr Lachlan set to music, and sending for some persons who were known to "go on kailie" with Kate he taught them the song and instructed them to sing it in her hearing on the first opportunity. Strange! It was so, but the suddenness of the blow, from such an unexpected quarter, gave point to the stroke, while God drove the truth right home to her heart.

Her agony of mind was fearful. The bleak scenery of Lochcarron was in strange unison with her feelings. Among the dreary mountains of that lonesome western wilderness runs up the small estuary from which the parish derives its name. In these wilds Kate now spent most of her time. For what purpose? Joseph-like, she sought where to weep. The solitudes of Lochcarron were heard to resound with the voice of wailing, and the inmates of the bothies amid the hills knew from whose lips those cries of agony were wrung. They came from the once hardened Muckle Kate. Deep as her conviction was, it never seemed to subside: weeks, months, even years passed, yet the sorrows of the convicted sinner were as fresh as ever. "Never breathed a wretch like her; there might be hope for others, but oh, there was none for Muckle Kate!"

She was a "wonder to many," as well she might be, for at her age, between 80 and 90, it is rare to see a person called by grace. However, age has nothing to do with the matter as in God's sight; the set-time had come for her to be brought to know herself a sinner, and now she was a wonder to her neighbours, to unbelievers, to the Church, to her astonished minister, but most of all, a wonder to herself. Into the depths of conviction under the law she, poor soul, went, inasmuch as to understand that part of it which says: "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes" (Lev. xxvi. 16), and Muckle Kate wept herself stone blind! Yes, without exaggerating by a hair's-breadth, she wept away her eyesight! Poor Kate! Rich Kate!! What deep penetrating eyes she had into her own soul's state before God!!! Would that God would give many of us this hard-hearted day a few tears for sin.

One cannot help saying that in this point Muckle Kate was conformed to her Lord: "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." Another saintly Scotsman has said: "Faith will come out of the eye, in lieu of another door." Stephen looked up to heaven, a pitiful and hungry look up to Christ out at the

window, to tell that a poor friend was coming up to Him. I would wish no more if I were in hell, but to send a look up to heaven. The twinkling of thine eyes in prayer are not lost to Christ" (Samuel Rutherford). If "the twinkling of the eyes are not lost to Christ," we may be sure the complete destruction of the sight of the eyes are not, and so Muckle Kate found.

During one of her visits to the Manse, and while waiting to converse with her minister, she heard the noise of a flock of ducklings, and, not aware of the presence of any other person, she said: "O, my poor things, ye're happy, happy creatures. Ye ha'e na' crucified a Saviour like me; it would be well for Muckle Kate to be a duck like you, for then she would have no sin to answer for—no sin, no sin!" Others have entered a little into this feeling of the poor blind woman. In the third year of her sorrow for sin her minister was anxious for her to sit down at the Lord's Table, but nothing could prevail upon her to comply with his requests.

"I go forward to that holy table! I, who have had my arms up to the shoulders in a Saviour's blood! My presence would profane that blessed ordinance, and would be enough to pollute the whole congregation! Never will I sit down at that Table; the communion is not for me!" However, it was for her. The communion day arrived, the hour of meeting drew nigh, but Kate's determination still remained unchanged. The tables had all been served, the elements removed, the minister had returned to "the tent," and all were listening for the words of the concluding address, when a cry of despair was heard in a distant part of the audience—a shriek of female agony—that rose loud and clear, and was returned, as if in sympathy, by the echoes of the surrounding hills. It was the voice of Muckle Kate, who now thought all was over. Hundreds started to their feet and looked anxiously toward the spot whence the scream had proceeded. Mr Lachlan knew the voice, and as each true pastor has a pastor's heart, he understood the cause of the cry, stepped over among the people till he had reached the spot, took Kate kindly by the hand, led her through the crowd to the communion table, and seated her at the head. He next ordered the elements to be brought forward and replaced upon the table; and there sat that one solitary blind being, alone in the midst of thousands—every eye of the vast multitude turned in wonder upon her—partaking of the emblems of the Saviour's body and blood, she herself unconscious of their gaze. Muckle Kate lived about three years after this, manifesting the marks of a close and humble walk with God. Not having seen any account as to the manner of her Gospel deliverance from the terrors of the law under

which she so long suffered, we cannot state the means used, but of the reality of her deliverance, her life henceforth, and her triumphant death testify.

The wicked may "have no bands in his death" and friends say concerning him "he died like a lamb," and like "sheep they are laid in the grave, but the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning" of the resurrection. As Muckle Kate was led deep into the knowledge of sin and sorrow for sin, so she was led deep into the knowledge of Christ; and so clear as to her interest in His work, that assurance became so sure that she ceased to think of self: she was absorbed in the glory of her Redeemer, Christ was all in all to her. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ," was her happy experience.

As she stood on the threshold of eternal glory, her sanctified tongue was heard to exclaim, as its farewell effort to honour Christ: "Tell, tell to others that I have found Him." Lay the emphasis upon the "I," and what depth of sin, shame, and pollution are comprised in that "I." If we could compress into that "I" those ninety years of sin—as she had been taught sin—as she had felt sin—as she had wept her sight away for sin—we should better catch what she meant when she said, "I have found Him."

"Tell them that the worst of sinners—the drunkard, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, the scoffer, the infidel—tell them that I, a living embodiment of every sin, even I, have found a Saviour's person, even I have known a Saviour's love." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

The above was originally written in the "Christian Treasury," but I have condensed it from "Strangers and Pilgrims," by the late Mr Bradbury. Having alluded to this striking case in a sermon, I read it again, and while so doing felt a desire to enable others to share a little of the joy one felt in reading such a record of Sovereign Grace. Reader, if you fear God, you will bless Him for such mercy as is here evident. But if one reads this who is still without God, I would say: you may not have sinned openly as poor Muckle Kate, but God looks on your heart, and unless you partake of saving mercy before you die, you must be eternally lost. Hell is solemnly true, notwithstanding many declaring against it. The wages of sin is death—eternal death—after the death of the body. Should a true seeker read this, one who feels he

is too bad for salvation, surely here is something to encourage such to hope for mercy. If He has given you the felt want, the anxious yearning after His blood to be applied to your soul; if He, in mercy, has granted you sorrow for sin, then it is hoped, by His blessing, that this record of saving mercy may encourage you to press your case before Him who is "plenteous in mercy."

Some may say: "This is another sentimental religious tract got up to frighten folk." The author of this narrative in its original form submitted the proof-sheet to the inspection of Mr Lachlan's sister and nephew; the former of whom distinctly remembered the circumstances recorded, and was actually present at the serving of "Muckle Kate's Table" at Lochcarron, while the nephew also testifies to the truth of the same, for he heard from his uncle's lips the story very shortly before he died.

“ROS O SHARON”

SEARMOIN

LEIS

An Urr. LACHLAN MACCOINNICH

“Is ròs o Sharon mise, lili nan gleann. Mar lili am measg droighnich, is amhuil mo ghràdh-sa am measg nan nighean. Mar chrann-ubhall am measg chrann na coille, is amhuil mo rùn-sa am measg nan òganach; fuidh a sgàile mhiannaich mi, agus shuidh mi sìos, agus bha a thoradh milis do m' bhlas.”— DAN SHOLAMH, II. 1-3.

'S e 'tha ann so Dàn Spioradail agus naomh, a tha deanamh iomraidh air a' ghràdh a tha eadar Criosd agus 'Eaglais. Theirear ri Criosd anns na sgrìobtuiribh am Fear Nuadh Pòsda, agus a' Bhean Nuadh Phòsda ri gach anam a tha air a naomhachadh. Tha aonadh daingean eatorra; agus tha iad ann an dlùth dhaimh troimh an Spiorad Naomh. Bha i a thaobh nàduir neo-iomlan, agus gun mhaise, 'na luidhe ann am measg nam poit, 'g a h-aoirneagain ann an staid peacaidh agus truaighe; ach rinn a ghràdh maiseach agus sgiamhach i an làthair Dhé agus dhaoine. Oir air dhi sealladh fhaotainn air maise spioradail Chriosd: agus air dhi 'bhi air a sgeadachadh le fhìreantachd-sa, agus air a naomhachadh le a Spiorad-sa, tha i nis a' seinn a chliù, agus a' deanamh luaidh air 'òirdheirceas, agus a sonas féin. Tha 'n gràdh d' a chéile agus an aoibhneas air a chur sìos ann am briathraibh samhlachail nan dàn.

CINN TEAGAISG:—

I. Cionnas a shamhlaichear Criosd ris an ròs agus ris an lili, agus ris a' chrann-ubhall am measg chrann na coille?

II. Gu'm bheil an Eaglais mar an lili am measg droighnich.

III. C' uin a theirear gu 'm bheil an t-anam 'n a shuidhe le aoibhneas fuidh a sgàile, agus gu 'm bheil a thoradh milis d' a bhlas?

1. Cionnas a shamhlaichear Criosd ris an ròs agus ris an lili, agus ris a' chrann-ubhal am measg chrann na coille?

I. 'S a' cheud àite. Tha Criosd 'n a dhaonnachd naomh coltach ris na blàthan maiseach sin, oir tha fionnarachadh 'n an fàileadh cùbhraidh. 'Nis tha fàile o thrusgan Chriosd do Alos, Mhìrr, 's do Chasia. Dhòirteadh gràs 'n a bhilibh. Ni teagasg 'Fhocail agus gràsan a Spioraid an cridhe a mhisneachadh, agus a neartachadh. 'N uair a tha an cogais 'g an dìteadh, agus iad fo iomaguin troimh mhothachadh air am peacaidhean, bheir a gheallaidhean fois dhoibh-san a tha airsnealach. 'N uair a gheibh duine sealladh air a pheacaidhean, agus a chreideas e'n a staid chaillte, tha an t-eas creidimh ro-bhuailteach air a bhàthadh ann an cuan an eu-dòchais. Ach aig a' cheart uair sin thig geallanna an t-Soisgeil le fuasgladh, 's beothachadh d'a chridhe anfhann. Agus mar a thug an Soisgeul air tùs misneach dha a thighinn agus a dhòchas a shuidheachadh air an t-Slànuighear, 's e daonnan bunait a dhòchais agus 'earbsa. Ma gheibh duine e féin trominntinneach, agus mi-shunndach, ni deadh fhàile nam blàthan a bheothachadh. Mar sin cuiridh am focal treòir anns a' chridhe, agus beatha anns an anam.

'S e bh' ann an Saron aium àite sònraichte, no earrainn dùtcha. B' àite e a réir nan sgrìobtairean, a bha ro-bhriagh agus ro-thorach, agus a bha ainmeil air son a chluaintean, agus a lusan. Cha 'n ann ri ròs a' ghàraidh, ach ri ròs o Sharon a tha e 's a shamhlachadh féin. Tha a ghràs saor, agus a thairgse do na h-uile; agus cha dean e maoidheadh. Cha 'n 'eil flùr a' ghàraidh ach air son a' bheagan, ach tha blàth na macharach saor do na h-uile, agus mar na blàthan maiseach sin, anns an achadh, tha Criosd, ann an raon farsuinn an t-Soisgeil, saor do na h-uile, ach gu h-àraidh do na peacaich sin uile, aig am bheil an cridhe leònta leis a' pheachadh. Co am fear a' siubhal troimh Sharon ag amharc air a leithid so de mhaise, nach bitheadh air a thogail 'na inntinn le aoibhneas. Ach na 'm bitheadh lan-ghealltanais aige, gu 'm b' ann leis féin a bha na bha 'na shealladh, cia mo gu mòr a bhitheadh 'aoibhneas. Is amhuil a bhitheas esan a gheibh sealladh spioradail air raointean farsuinn an t-soisgeil. "Bheirear glòir Lebanoin dha, maise Charmeil agus Sharoin." Mar sin, tha Criosd mar an ròs, agus an lili 'na fhàile cùbhraidh, agus 'na mhaise; agus 'nuair a chì sinn a ghlòir, agus a bhlaiseas sinn a mhisleachd, nach priseil a' naigheachd do pheacaich air an gairm, agus gur e 'm beatha tighinn thuige.

Mar an crann-ubhal, ann a' maise agus toradh, is amhuil tha esan. Cha 'n 'eil toradh, fionnarachd, na

fasgath ri fhaotainn o chroabhan eile, ged is lionmhor na tha 'dol thuca, a' dh' iarraidh beathachadh agus ùrachadh d'an anam. Theid cuid gu craobh an eòlais, chum iad fein a' lionadh le a toradh gun bhrìgh; agus labhraidh iad mu 'n t-soisgeul, ged nach do bheathaich an anam riamh air. Cha 'n 'eil ann an ni sam bith eile, anns am bheil iad a' cur a' muinighin, ach cuile bhrìste; ach ann an craoibh na beatha tha lòn, agus fasgath do 'n anam. Is e Crìosd am fìor chrann-ubhall a tha giùlan dà ghnè dheug thoraidh, agus a tha toirt a thoraidh uaithe gach uile mhios; agus tha a dhuilleadh chum leighis nan Cinneach. Is lionmhoir ar n-eugailean, ach aige-san tha iocshlaint air son euslaint ar 'n anama. Tha beatha aig ann fein, agus bheir e beatha d'a shluagh. Agus 'nuair a dh' athbheothaicheas e iad chum 's gu 'm bi tlachd aca ann am beatha nan gràs, bithidh a thoradh 'na aran na beatha d' an anamaibh truaighe gun treoir.

II. Gu 'm bheil an Eaglais mar an lili am measg dhroighnich. An ni a tha fìor anns an t-seadh is àirde mu Chrìosd gu spioradail, tha e ann an tomhas fìor mu 'eaglais, oir 'se an aon chaidreabh a gheibh iad o'n t-saoghal 's a fhuair am maighstir.

Tha an lili tlachdmhoir do 'n t-sùil, cùbhraidh, agus mìn, ach mu 'n droigheann cha 'n 'eil so fìor. Tha gràs Dhé aig na fìor chreidich, agus nàdur nuadh a tha 'na thaisbeanadh fein 'nan caithe-beatha, 's na giùlain. Tha a nadur naomh, 's tha an caithe-beatha a réir an t-soisgeil. Mar a dh' aithnichear le fhàile cìod e an stuth a tha ann an soitheach, mar sin aithnichear le 'bhriathraibh, is le 'ghìùlain, cìod e an gnè spioraid do 'm bheil duine. Ma tha duine ann an Crìosd is creutair nuadh e, agus tha a ghiomhara comh-fhreagaireadh ri 'nàdur nuadh. An ni tha fìor gu spioradail tha e fìor gu nàdurra. Theid a' t-uan a dh'ionnsuidh an fheòir agus an tunnag do 'n uisge, oir 'se so an nàdur; ach taisbeanadh an sionnach a dhéigh air fuil. Tha an nàdur nuadh, agus na gnìomhara a tha a' sruthadh uaithe, maiseach agus tlachdmhor mar an lili; ach tha na h-aingidh mar an droigheann; cha bhuin thu dhoibh gun chron dhuit fein. Is mòr an t-eadar-dhealachadh a tha eadar an lili 's an droigheann; agus mar is faisge iad air a chéile 's ann is soilleire bhitheas so. Shaoileadh thu gu 'm bitheadh deadh bhuaidh aig easeamplair mhaith a' chreidich air an aingidh, ach cha 'n e so idir a chì sinne a' tachairt. Oir ged a bha Lot a' gabhail còmhnuidh am measg nan aingidh cha do dh' iompaich e iad. Nochd Noah mar an ceudna eiseamplair mhaith do 'n t-sean saoghal. Bha iad

sin mar na lilidhean am measg droighnich, agus gidheadh an deadh eiseamplair bhunaich na h-aingidh nan aingidheachd. Bithidh an droigheann 'na dhroigheann dhaindeoin cho dluth 's a bhitheas e air an lili. Feudaidh thu aolach a chur ri 'bhun, agus mòr shaoithair a' chaitheamh air, ach cha dean sin a chaoidh lili de 'n droigheann; mar an ceudna feudaidh thu muinntir a' sgitheachadh le ùrnuighean 's searmoinean, feudaidh thu òirdheirceas subhailce, agus uamhasan an lagha agus geallaidhean priseil an t-soisgeil a chur ri an aghaidh, ach cha 'n 'eil iadsan ach na 'm peacaich neoiompaichte—na droigheann. Ach their faineair briathra an t-Slànuighear ag radh A Ghradh ris an lili, a tha e faicinn ann am measg an droighnich. Tha a shùil air a shluagh ann am measg an t-saoghail aingidh agus thruaillidh, ge be air bith a their daoine mu 'n timchioll.

2. Tha an lili air son a' ghàraidh, ach 's e crìoch an an droighnich a losgadh. Tha sluagh Dhé anns an t-saoghal mar an lili ann am fasaich dhris agus dhroighnich, ach bithidh iad air an atharrachadh gu 'bhi air a' suidheachadh ann am Pàros shuas. 'Mheud 'sa tha na lilidhean 'san t-saoghal so bithidh iad air a' suidheachadh ann a' gàradh Dhé, far am bith iad fuidh ghathan grian na fìreantachd, agus làn chothrom aca air am blàthan a' sgaoileadh a mach. Cha chuir an droigheann ni 's fhaide bacadh air am fàs, oir loisgear le teine e. Ann am freasdal glic Dhé, a reir a ruin iongantaich 's diomhair, tha e air a cheadachadh dhoibh fàs còmhlaith air thalamh.

3. Tha na lilidhean tearc an coimeas ris an droigheann. Is minic a chi thu fùraichean ann am broilleach neach; agus so air son an deadh fhàile, ach cha 'n fhaic thu droigheann na dris uair 'sam bith ann an sin. Cha sheall an droigheann na 'n dris dreachail anns a' bhroilleach, cuir an òrdugh e mar thogras thu. Mar an ceudna tha na fìor chreidich agus na naiomh tearc an coimeas ris na h-aingidh; agus a dh'aindeoin do shaothair cha dean thu fireana de 'n aingidh; agus ged a dh'fhoadadh thu'sa fireana a' ràdh riu cha 'n aidich an Tighearn' iad mar a shluagh-sa, 's cha dean e luchd-compairt d' a ghradh dhiu, agus cha bhi co-chomuinn aige ri 'n anamaibh.

III. C'uin a theirear gu 'm bheil an t-anam na shuidhe le aoibhneas fuidh a sgàile agus gu 'm bheil a thoradh milis d'a bhlas?

'S e Crìosd Fear Nuadh Pòsda na h-Eaglais, agus tha e a' seasamh an dlùth dhaimh rithe. 'Nuair a bha a bhean nuadh phòsda air a toirt a dh' ionnsuidh an t-seòmair phosaidh bha brat sgaoilte air slataibh thairis air an fhear

phòsda agus oirre-se. Feudaiddh so bhi samhlachadh gu 'n robh i ann am fasgath, agus fuidh dhion a fir pòsda. Ann an iomadh earrainn de 'n fhirinn—mar ann an Is. iv. 6—“Agus bithidh e 'na bhùth, air son sgàile o'n teas anns an là, agus air son didein, agus air son ionad-fasgaidh o'n doininn agus o'n uisge”; tha sgàile ciallachadh dion. 'Nise thugadh Iosa mar ainm air ar Slanuighear, “oir saoraidh e a shluagh fein o'm peacaibh”; agus 'nuair a theicheas iad thuige air son fasgaidh bithidh e 'na bhaile dion, 's 'na thur làidir, 's 'na dhaingneach dhoibh. Is esan craobh na beatha, agus is e am fasgath o'n teas, agus an didean o na siantaibh, agus o'n doininn. 'Nis suidhidh an t-anam sios le aoibhneas fuidh sgàile craoibh na beatha.

1. 'Nuair a chi e a choirichean anns na sochairibh, a tha sruthadh o bhàs Chrìosd; agus is e obair àraidh a' chreidimh greim a dheanamh orra, agus Crìosd a' dhlùth ghabhail thuige. Is e tha 'n soisgeul ag radh “Fhuair Crìosd bàs air son nam peacach” ach 'se tha creidimh ag ràdh “fhuair e bàs air mo shonsa.” 'Nuair a tha ceartas an tòir air an anam, a tha faicinn, agus a criothnachadh aig toillteannas a' pheacaidh, cha dàndas dha teicheadh a dh' ionnsuidh na h-àirce. Cha bu dānachd do 'n ti 'theich o dhioghaltair na fola aghaidh a chur air a' bhaile dhion, oir b'e an t-àite fasgaidh air òrdughachadh leis an lagh. Cha bu dānadas do Naaman, an Sirianach, e fein a' nigh seachd uairean ann an Iordan, oir b'e so àithne Dhé Israeil, agus b'e so am meadhon leis an robh e air a leigheas. A nis is e fuil a' chrathaidh, anns an t-soisgeul, meadhon slàinte gach anama. Is e cainnt an t-soisgeil, “ionnlaid thu fein, agus bith glan”; ach cionnas a bhitheas sin glan gus am bith an fhuil air a crathadh air ar coguis. Cha 'n abrar gu 'm bheil duine compairteachadh de 'n t-Suiper ann a bhi creidsinn, a mhàin, gu bheil e air a ghairm, agus air a chuireadh, oir is e àithne, “Gabhaibh, ithibh, agus òlaibh uile dheth”; agus mar an ceudna chum a bhi a' gabhail de na sochairibh a tha 'sruthadh o bhàs Chrìosd, feumaidh iocshlaint, na fola a bhi air a cur ri ar n' anamaibh, agus sin an bhi creidsinn gu 'm bheil so air son ar maith. 'Nuair a shuidheas duine aig cuirm, am bheil e a' gabhail dhi mur am bheil e ach a' creidsinn gu 'm bheil e air a chuireadh agus gur e a bheatha gabhail? Cha 'n 'eil! mur a h-ith e, agus mur a h òl e tha e toirt oilbheum do fhear na cuirme; tha e mi-mhodhail, agus cha 'n 'eil e a' deanamh a dhleasdanas; ach tha e a' deanamh cron dha fein. Ach ma ghabhas e de 'n chuir le subhachas bheir e toileachas do fhear na cuirme, agus bithidh e fein sona le pàirteachadh ann an còmhradh na chuideachd aig a' bhòrd.

Air a' mhodh cheudna tha e air iarraidh oirnn creidsinn ann an Criosd, agus gur e beatha 'pheacaich tighinn thuige; agus c' ar son ma seadh a dhùininn-se mi-fein a mach. Fhuair Chriosd bàs air son pheacach, ach 'se bhi a' creidsinn gu 'n dh' fhuair e bàs air mo shonsa bheir dhomhsa còir a bhi agam na oibribh, agus 'na fhulangasaibh. Ach mur am bheil càil agam, ciod 'ni mi ach amharc ri fear na cuirme air son an Spiorad Naomh, ocras spioradail a' chur 'na m' anam. Ma dh' itheas mi cha ruig mi leas eagal a bhi orm nach e mo bheatha e. Cuiremid, mar sin, ar muinighin anns an t-Slànuighear, agus is leinne a bhean-nachdan san gu leir. Ach a nis feumaidh mi a cheisd a' fhreagradh; mur am bheil an spiorad ag oibreachadh na m' anam an creid mi? Cha chreid. Ach cha 'n ann a stigh ach a suas a sheallas mi air son a' chomais. 'Nuair a dh' amhairceas mi asteach cha 'n fhaic mi ach an t-eas-creidimh agus aimhreit. Amhaire ri fear deas laimhe Dhé, agus bheir esan dhuit an spiorad. Oibrichidh an spiorad creideamh, agus ged is e d' fhaireachduinn-se gu 'm bheil thu marbh, is e Criosd an aiseirigh, agus a' bheatha. Thig a mach as do staid mharbh agus mhi-chreideach; is àill le Dia gu 'n creideadh thu, agus gu 'n earbadh thu slàinte d' anama ri Criosd luachmhor; agus mu ni thu sin, tha Criosd ag ràdh anns an t-soisgeul, " Agus ge b'e neach leis an àill gabhadh e uisge na beatha gu saor "; agus ma ghabhas thu 'se do bheatha. Tha sinn air an aobhar sin a' suidh fuidh a sgàile le aoibhneas, 'nuair a tha sinn a' cur ar muinighin 'na airidheachd, agus a' gabhail slàinte Dhé d' ar 'n anamaibh.

2. Feudar a' ràdh gu 'm bheil neach a suidhe le aoibhneas fuidh a' sgàile, 'nuair tha cumhachd, a tha na leigheas o' eugail a' pheacaidh, a tighinn thuige o chraoibh na beatha. Tha ioc-shlaint 'nar Slànuighear air son ar n' anam, oir uaibhse thig an Spiorad Naomh le a chumhachd tearnuidh, a leaghas is a chaitheas an aon peacadh, mar a leaghas an sneachd leis an aiteamh. Is miosa anamiannan a' chridhe 'na plàigh nan locust — aon de plàighean na h-Eiphit. " Chòmhdaich na locuist aghaidh na talmhainn uile, air chor a's gu'n do dhòrchaicheadh an talamh, agus dh' ith iad uile luibh na talmhainn, agus uile mheas na macharach." 'Se so a' bhuaidh a th' aig a' pheacadh air an anam. Lagaichidh e a bhuadhan; milledh e uile shòlasan; bheir e air falbh a mhaise, agus lionaidh se e le dòruinn. Ach thoir fainear ciod e 'thug air falbh na locuist as an Eiphit; " Agus ghuidh Maois air an Tighearn, gaoth an iar ro-làidir, a thug air falbh na locuist agus a

thilg iad sa' Mhuir Rhuaidh: cha d' fhan aon locust ann an crìochaibh na h-Eiphit uile." 'S co-ionann a phlaigh a tha air an anam thruagh; ach leis a phlàigh so theid e dh' ionnsuidh craobh na beatha, agus suidhidh e fuidh a sgàile. Amhaircidh e ri Dia. Tha n' as motha dh' ùghdarras aig Crìosd ann an cùirt na flaitheis na bha aig Maois an làthair Pharaoh, na aig Pharaoh an làthair Mhaois. Tha am peacaidhean uile air an cur fuidh ann an doimhneachdaibh na fairge. Bha na locust air am bàthadh anns a' Mhuir Ruadh; agus mar sin tilgidh gaoth làidir an Spiorad ar peacaidhean uile ann a' Muir Ruadh fola Chrìosd; agus bheir a' leithid sin de shealladh neart do'n anam an aghaidh cumhachd a' pheacaidh. " Their Ephraim cìod mo ghnòthuchsa tuilleadh ri iodholaibh? " 'S e an t-iodhol a cheud pheacadh a theid a sgrios; agus 'nuair a thuiteas esan teichidh feachd nan Philisteach air falbh, mar a thachair roimh 'nuair a mharbhadh an curaidh. 'Nuair a thuit Goliath theich an Armait. Tha so a toirt gu mo chuimhne cungaidd leigheis, a dh' òrdughaich lichich ro-ainmeil a bha ann an Alba air a' mheudbhronn. Dh' iarr e mial-mhagach a' sgoltadh agus a' cur air an druim mu choinneamh nan àirnean; agus gu 'n cuireadh so a mach an t-uisge a thionail anns a' chòm. 'Nuair a dh' fhàsas an t-iodhol, no na peacaidhean a tha thu a' gradhachadh, gràineil dhuit mar a' mhial-mhagach, tilgidh thu a mach iad. Ann an sin suidhidh thu fuidh sgàile Chrìosd — an Crann ubhall agus Craobh na beatha. Nach bith toradh fhulangais milis aig do bhlas? Suidhidh thu le aoibhneas fuidh sgàile, agus fairichidh thu a chumhachd ann a t-anam.

3. Suidhidh e le aoibhneas fuidh sgàile 'nuair a gheibh e comhfhurtachd ann an uaigneas anama. Tha eòlasan na fìor dhiadhachd sèimh, sìothchail, taitneach; agus cha 'n 'eil iad bras agus garg mar an sruth cas. Siùbhlaidd iad gun thoirm, agus gun fharum mar uisgeachan domhain na h-aimhne mòire, troimh dhùthaich chòmhnard. Bithidh uairean aig na creidhmhich anns am bith iad air an lionadh cho mòr a' beachdachadh air an sonas fein, agus air iomlanachd buadhan glormhor Iehobhah, agus air glòir an Slanuighear, agus gu 'm bith aoibhneas do-labhairt aca. Tha an smuaintean cho ard thar cainnt, agus gu 'm bheil iad balbh le aoibhneas, agus uaimhinn aig a' mhorachd a tha fuidh chomhair an inntinn; agus am beul dùinte, beachd smuainteachadh le gairdeachas. Tha aoibhneas a' chreidmhhich sin ni 's doimhne, agus ni 's buaine na aoibhneas a' chreidmhhich eu domhain, nach ceil aighear n' a' bhròn. Nach i so an fhiordhiadhachd a tha mar shruth fìor ghlan,

agus neoshalach? Ciod i ach meur “ do dh’ amhainn fìorghlan do uisge na beatha, soilleir mar chriostal, a’ teachd a rìgh chaithir Dhé agus an Uain.” Tha na solasan so a’ naomhachadh an anama; agus tha iomhaigh Dhé a’ dealradh ann. Agus mar tha iomhaigh na gréine anns an t-sruth shoilleir, tha sòlasan na diadhachd anns an anam, a tha air a ghlanadh o ghràinealachd a’ pheacaidh agus na feòla, agus a tha feitheamh gu foisdinneach ri guth caol ciùin an t-soisgeil.

4. Suidhidh e le aoibhneas fuidh sgàile Chrìosd, ’n uair a tha e mi-thoileach air a dhol air ais a dh’ionnsuidh an t-saoghail, agus their e mar a thuirt Peadar, “ Is maith dhuinne ’bhi an so.” ’N uair chaidh Maois gu mullach Phisgach, agus a fhuair e sealladh air tìr a’ gheallaidh, feudaidd sinn a chreidsinn nach d’ fharich e an ùine fada ann an sin. Ach bu shòlasaiche gu mòr na so an suidheachadh anns an robh na deisciobuil, ’n uair bha iad air beinn a’ chruth-atharrachaidh maille ris an t-Slànuighear, agus a chunnaic iad a ghlòir, agus fhuair iad plathadh agus roimhbhasad de na flaitheas. Bha ’n sealladh cho glòrmhor, agus sòlasach, agus gu ’n d’ thubhairt aon de na deisciobuil ris an Tighearna, “ A Mhaighstir, is maith dhuinne ’bhi an so.” Bha iad toileach air fantuinn air an t-sliabh, agus trì pàillianna a dheanamh, “ aon do Chrìosd, aon do Mhaois, agus aon do Elias.” Ma lion roimh-bhasad de na flaitheas an t-Abstol le aoibhneas do-labhairt, co a ghabhas a stigh an sonas a tha ann an sìorruidheachd ’s an ionad sin? Ma bhlas sinn air fion-dhearcan Ghlinn Escoil, agus air bainne ’s mil Chanàain, cha bhi iarrtas againn an dèidh phoit-fheòla na h-Eiphit.

Co-dhùnaidh mi le bhi a’ toirt fainear o ’n teagasg so:—

1. Gu ’m bheil am fìor-Chreideach agus an cealgair cho eadar-dhealaichte is a tha an lili agus an droigheann. Tha céile Chrìosd am measg nan nighean mar tha an lile am measg an droighnich. Cha ’n abair e “ Mo ghràdh ” ri aon de na nigheanan, ach na tha mar na lilidhean bitheadh iad ’n an luchd-aideachaidh no nan luchd-àicheadh. Ach a nis, mo chàirdean, an lilidhean no an droigheann sibhse? Cuiribh a’ cheist ri bhuir cridheachan féin. Ciod e an Spiorad aig am bheil buaidh oirbh? Ciod iad briathra bhuir beòil agus gnìomhara ’ur beatha? Tha daonnachd naomh Chrìosd mar an ròs agus an lili. Tha a Spiorad a’ deanamh a shluagh uile cosmhuil ris féin. Is e naomhachd crìoch nan uile mheadhon; agus ma tha sibhse toileach a’ bhi beò gun a bhi leantuinn naomhachd ’na ’ur cridhe ’s ’na ’ur caithe-beatha is diomhain ’ur diadhachd. Feudaiddh

sibh, sibh fein a mhealladh, ach cha dean sibh Dia a' mhealladh. Cia uamhasach diadhachd na muinntir sinn a tha a' cur ri aingidheachd beatha pheacach, cionta a chealgair gun ghràs, a tha toilichte le diadhachd gun Chrìosd. Gabhaidh iad aran agus fion, agus mar am papanach truagh their iad rinn sin an Dia. Ni iad so, ach cha smuainich iad air-san fad na bliadhna gus an ath-ordugh. Gu gabhadh Dia trùas ris a' mhuinntir sin, a tha a' deanamh an Dia de na sàmhlaidhean.

2. O na bhriathraibh so tha sinn a' fòghlum, do bhrìgh lànachd a ghràs, agus iomlanachd a dhiadhachd, cho comasach is a tha Crìosd air a shluagh a' thearnadh gu h-iomlan. Tha a dhaonnachd naomh mar an lili agus an ròs; tha a cheann no a dhiadhachd—mar an t-òr; tha de a thrusgan—a dhaonnachd—fàile an alois, mhirr 's chasia; agus tha a rìgh-chaithir, do bhrìgh is gur Mac Dhé e, gu saoghal nan saoghal. Ma tha sinn lag-chridheach, le eas-creidimh agus le peacadh agus droch-fhairichtan, tha ainm-san mar oladh ungaidh air a dòrtadh; agus a bharrachd air a sin tha e air a shamhlachadh ri fluraichean deadh-fhaile, agus mar sin tha e uile-chomasach gu 'bhi 'g ath-bheothachadh, agus ag ùrachadh ar cridheachan. Am bheil thu ann an teagamh mu 'chumhachd, do bhrìgh gu robh e bochd? cuimhnich gu robh sgàile air a ghlòir. Am fac thu dubhar no neul air a' ghrein? 'Dh' irioslaich-se e fein agus rinneadh e 'na dhuine, ach dh' àrdaich e an duine, agus tha Crìosd 'na Dhia agus 'na dhuine, ann an aon phearsa gu sìorruidh. Am peacach thu Am peacach mòr thu? Am bheil do thruaillidheachd mòr agus gràineil, smuainich air a phearsa ghloirmhoir so, agus earb d' anam ris “Tha gach aon ni comasach do neach a chreideas.” Tha e ag ràdh riut anns an t-soisgeul, “Am bheil thu creidsinn gur comasach mise so a dheanamh?” mar a thubhairt E roimh ris an duine dhall. Creid annsan, oir aige-san tha uile chumhachd air nèamh agus air talamh; agus ma chreideas, feudaiddh thu da-rìreadh suidhe sìos fuidh sgàile le mor aoibhneas; agus bithidh a thoradh milis do d' bhlas. Amhaire ri craobh na beatha; creid, agus bith air do leighis.

3. A bhi co-dhùnadh. Ma tha blas de chraoibh na beatha, air thalamh, cho taitneach—agus uiread do shoehairean priseil a' sruthadh uaithe; agus ma tha ar n-anam, 'n uair a shuidheas sinn fo sgàile, ach tamul beag, air an ùrachadh cho mòr, ciod e an sonas neo-chrìochnaichte tha anns an ionad sin, far am bheil E ri 'fhaicinn, gun neul agus gun sgàile air a ghlòir? Is e gnothac h, agus crìoch mhòr òrduighean an t-Soisgeil, 'ur n-ullachadh air son sòlasan na

siorruidheachd. Thoir o 'aoradh air thalamh gach neo-iomlanachd a tha comh-cheangailte ris, agus bithidh tomhas de ghloir na flaitheas agad. Chi thu ann an sin Craobh na Beatha; agus suidhidh thu fo a sgàile gu saoghal nan saoghal. Chi thu E mar a tha E. Cha ghearain thu nis mo air buairidhean an nàmhaid, buairidhean an droch chridhe, no air buairidhean saoghal aingidh. Tha lànachd aoibhneis 'na làthair-sa; tha mòr shubhachas aig a dheas-laimh-sa gu sìorruidh. Còmhnaich, air an aobhar sin, le aoibhneas fo a sgàile. Beachd-smuainich air maise spioradail, agus òirdheirceas neo-chrìochnaichte d' Fhear Nuadh Pòsda ann an glòir. Tréig d' iodhalan; agus cuir cùl ris an t-saoghal, oir tha thu air do ghairm gus a' bheinn. Gabh suas gu beinn nan òrdugh. Suidh fo sgàile fionnar Craobh na Beatha. Ith de 'toradh. Tha e milis do 'n bhlas. Ith, is mair beò gu sìorruidh. Gu 'm beannaicheadh Dia 'fhocal.—Amen.

PROPHETICAL POEM

By The Rev. LACHLAN MACKENZIE

(IN AN ABRIDGED FORM)

THE Gospel everywhere makes way,
And conquers where it goes,
Book-learning, and the fire and sword,
In vain their force propose.

The Church supported by her God,
Looks up by faith and prayer,
She conquers by the Saviour's blood ;
She's under heaven's care.

The doctrines that by her were preach'd,
Were grace, faith, self-denial,
Contempt for wealth and worldly power,
Temptation, fiery trial.

The Saviour by his Spirit now
Ascends the Gospel car,
He rides—he strikes—and conquers too,
And on the world makes war.

The Pagan worship falls apace,
Without a human hand ;
At last the Dragon's power fails,
And cannot longer stand.

The gospel rides in triumph now,
Supported by the State ;
But outward power hurt the Church,
When she wax'd rich and great.

The Dragon* plays another game ;
Assumes another shape,
When the great clergy thirst for power,
For wealth and honour gape.

He first attempts by fire and sword
Her being to destroy ;
Attacks her next by heretics,
And does his guile employ.

When neither of these schemes succeeds,
Another plan must please ;
The Church turns rich and opulent,
Doth roll in wealth and ease.

The clergy strive for place and pow'r,
And keep the people blind ;
The opiate lulls the Church asleep,
And faith is ill to find.

At last old Satan finds a man
In whom he can confide ;
The plan was deep and widely laid ;
A plan he well could hide.

He lent his power to the man,
But did baptize him wrong ;
He told him he might mimic Christ,
And this would make him strong.

The man at last became so great,
That all the world did wonder,
And when the Church did him oppose,
His voice arose to thunder.

His coat was red with all the blood
Of all the saints he slew.
The gospel partly brought him down ;
His end we soon shall view

Grace and redemption through the Lamb,
These truths did bring him low ;
When Jesus Christ shall wear the crown
This will bring down the foe.

The Eastern Antichrist shall fall,
By the strong gospel sound ;
The Jews return to Palestine ;
The holy city found.

And glorious days shall then succeed,
Such as were never seen ;
The sheep of Christ shall then be safe,
And feed in pastures green.

But first the witnesses are slain :
The man begins to crow.
In midst of this proud insult,
They rise and fight the foe.

When Rome shall be destroyed with fire,
The beast is living still ;
The Pope shall leave the Vatican,
And build on Zion Hill.

Tidings he hears from East and North,
To him some awful news ;
Great troubles sore, before their change
Must then affect the Jews.

The power that oppos'd the Church,
The beast and all his train,
Will hear their saving change by grace,
And this will give him pain.

" The rogues are heretics," he cries,
" Let us them all destroy ;
" Let us promote the cause of God,
" And give Mahuzzim joy."

Three filthy spirits like to frogs,
The beast and Satan spew ;
They gather all their slavish kings,
And all the Pagans too.

The Jews, supported by their God,
Do fight and gain the day ;
The witnesses, though all their friends
Must stand aloft and pray.

The cause is God's, and He Himself
Shall plead with all His foes ;
Ye idols help the man of Sin,
For now begin his woes.

The beast and prophet false speak out
"Mahuzzim, we are thine";
The Pagans likewise give a shout,
"And we the cause do join."

"Rock of my help, support thy Son,
"For I'm thy Son indeed."
The idol is both deaf and dumb,
The beast and prophet bleed.

They shed the blood of all the saints,
And now their blood is shed;
The victory belongs to God;
Behold the beast has fled.

In Armageddon he shall fall,
With all his filthy fry;
The prophet on the idols call,
And great shall be the cry.

"O great Mahuzzim, come and save
"Thy servants in distress;
"Behold how Jews, thine enemies,
"Thy cause do now oppress.

"Ye holy gods, protectors all,
"To you we humbly bow,
"The Jews are surely heretics
"And will not worship you."

Their gods protectors wond'ring stand;
Their blindness do admire;
The pocket crosses and their gods
Are burnt in Tophet fire.

The wicked beast is taken now,
And to the lake is cast;
The prophet false does share his fate;
This is their end at last.

The Jews now with uplifted hands,
Loud hallelujahs sing;
They cry "Hossanna to our God!
"Messiah rules as King!"

They conquer now on every side,
And rule from sea to sea ;
They spread the gospel far and near,
And preach that grace is free.

The beauteous Bride, the Jewish Church,
Herself shall then adorn ;
The marriage lasts a thousand years;
A num'rous race is born.

The places round God's hill are blest,
The Gentiles all come in ;
The enemy shall then be bound,
And Gospel sounds again.

Glory to God—good will on earth—
The Prince of Peace is here ;
The Spirit ruleth in the Church,
His works do now appear.

The great Millennium begins,
The Jews and Gentiles join ;
The nations yield to conqu'ring grace,
And to Messiah's reign.

The glorious Church of God appears,
Let all who hear rejoice ;
Behold the New Jerusalem ;
Let saints lift up their voice.

Jerusalem is now a proof
And pledge of joys above ;
Jerusalem is heaven on earth,
The seat of joy and love.

Messiah reigns—ye heavens bow—
Let earth and ocean smile ;
God dwells on earth, and now his saints
Are free from pain and toil.

The saints enjoy a pleasant calm,
There's joy on every face ;
They sing with triumph to their God,
" Salvation is of grace."

As the Millennium runs out,
The Gentiles' Church declines ;
When other Churches are eclips'd
The Church of Judah shines.

Stand on an eminence, and look
What awful sight is here.
Gog and his wicked multitude,
Behold, how they draw near.

The holy city he invests,
The camp he does surround ;
The Church now wrestles with her God,
And God is always found.

Gog and his host are struck at once,
By the strong Saviour's hand ;
For seven months they bury them.
And purify the land.

The Church declines in faith and love
And wickedness abounds :
Scoffers who prosecute their lusts,
Despise the gospel sounds.

The Jewish Church continues pure,
Retains her faith and love ;
Remains unshaken in her zeal,
And still does constant prove.

The world grows old in wickedness,
The Judge is at the door ;
They laugh at all the threatenings,
Few think the promise sure.

The world is ripe—the Judge appears,
His own first hear his voice ;
The trumpet sounds—the dead arise,
The virgins wise rejoice.

How soon the sentence is pronounced
The wicked bow the knee ;
Though they are lost, yet God is just,
And from their blood is free.

They did not bow the knee in time,
A crime they now deplore ;
Conscience pleads guilty, and they cry
“ We die for evermore.”

Among this wicked graceless crew,
No infidel appears ;
They lose their smiling arguments,
And their ungodly sneers.

The simple weak enthusiasts
Who oft did watch and pray,
They see now stand at the right hand,
And scoffers cast away.

The Gospel now is not a dream,
Nor was religion vain ;
The Sabbath is for ever lost,
Which they did oft profane.

The Saviour now invites the saints
To scenes of joy and love ;
And to partake of happiness
With the bright hosts above.

Ten thousand thousand still surround
The glorious hill of God ;
O happy souls who are prepared,
To see that blest abode.

May grace almighty wash our souls
And raise our thoughts above ;
And may we here prepare our minds
For scenes of joy and love !

The thoughts of Zion's beauteous hill
Should oft our minds employ ;
The lofty views of Paradise,
And all the songs of joy.

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ROBT. CARRUTHERS & SONS. .

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